Jackals

TRAVELLERS ON THE WAR ROAD

JOHN-MATTHEW DeFOGGI

OSPREY GAMES

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BRONZE AGE FANTASY ROLEPLAYING

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John-Matthew DeFoggi

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION....9
Rules for New Rites....10

CHAPTER 2

BOOK 1 – OF THE LUATHI AND ADAANSHUMMAR....13
The Luathi – The Children of Bronze....14
Judge, Kahar, and Throne....15
A Day in the Life of a Luathi....18
Holy Festivals....20
Luathi Jackals....22
Luathi History....24
The Four Tribes....26
Alwainism....28
Hasheers....30
New Rites....32
Equipment....38
Fate Talent....39
Tribal Virtues....40
Seasonal Actions....41

CHAPTER 3

BOOK 2 – OF THE GERWA AND THE LANDS OF THE SOUTH....43
The Gerwa – The Servants of the Living God-Kings....44
Gerwan Castes....45
A Day in the Life of a Gerwa....48
Holy Festivals....49
Gerwan Jackals....52
Gerwan History....54
The Six and the Eight....56
Hekas - the Necessary Outcasts....62
New Rites....64
Equipment....71
Caste Virtues....73
Temporary Traits....74
New Advancement....75

CHAPTER 4

BOOK 3 – OF THE TRAUJ AND THE EASTERN SANDS.................77

The Trauj – Descendants of Giants and Survivors of the Bronze Desert...............78
Trauj Clan Structure...80
A Day in the Life of a Trauj...82
Holy Festivals...84
Trauj Jackals...87
Trauj History...88
The Yahtah and the Yahtahmi...92
Alkitar..95
New Rites..96
Equipment..102
Mavok...103
Clan Virtues..104
Seasonal Actions...104

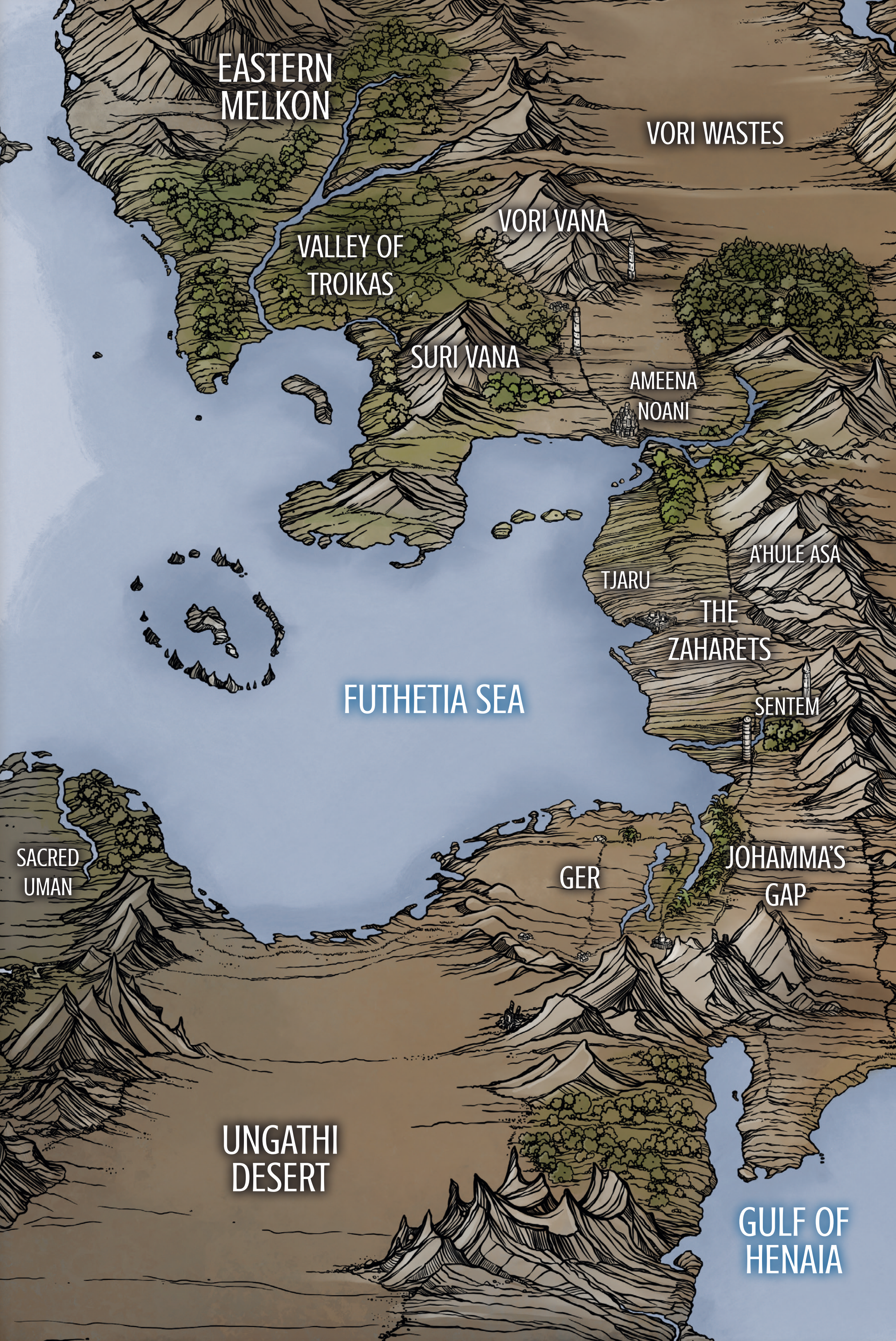
CHAPTER 5

BOOK 4 – OF THE MELKONI AND THE COLONIES.....................107

The Melkoni – Colonists from the West and Inheritors of Philosophy..............108
A Day in the Life of a Melkoni...109
Holy Festivals...110
The Melkoni of the Zaharets...112
Melkoni Jackals..113
Melkoni History..115
The Pantheon...121
Kleos..123
The Hero Cults...124
New Rites..126
Equipment..131
New Fate Talent...132
City Virtues...133

APPENDIX..134

New Equipment..134
Phases of the Moons...135
New Patrons..136
New Creature...138
Glossary..139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VALLEY OF TROIKAS
SURI VANA
AMEENA NOANI
A'HULE ASA
TJARU
THE ZAHARETS
FUTHETIA SEA
SENTEM
SACRED UMAN
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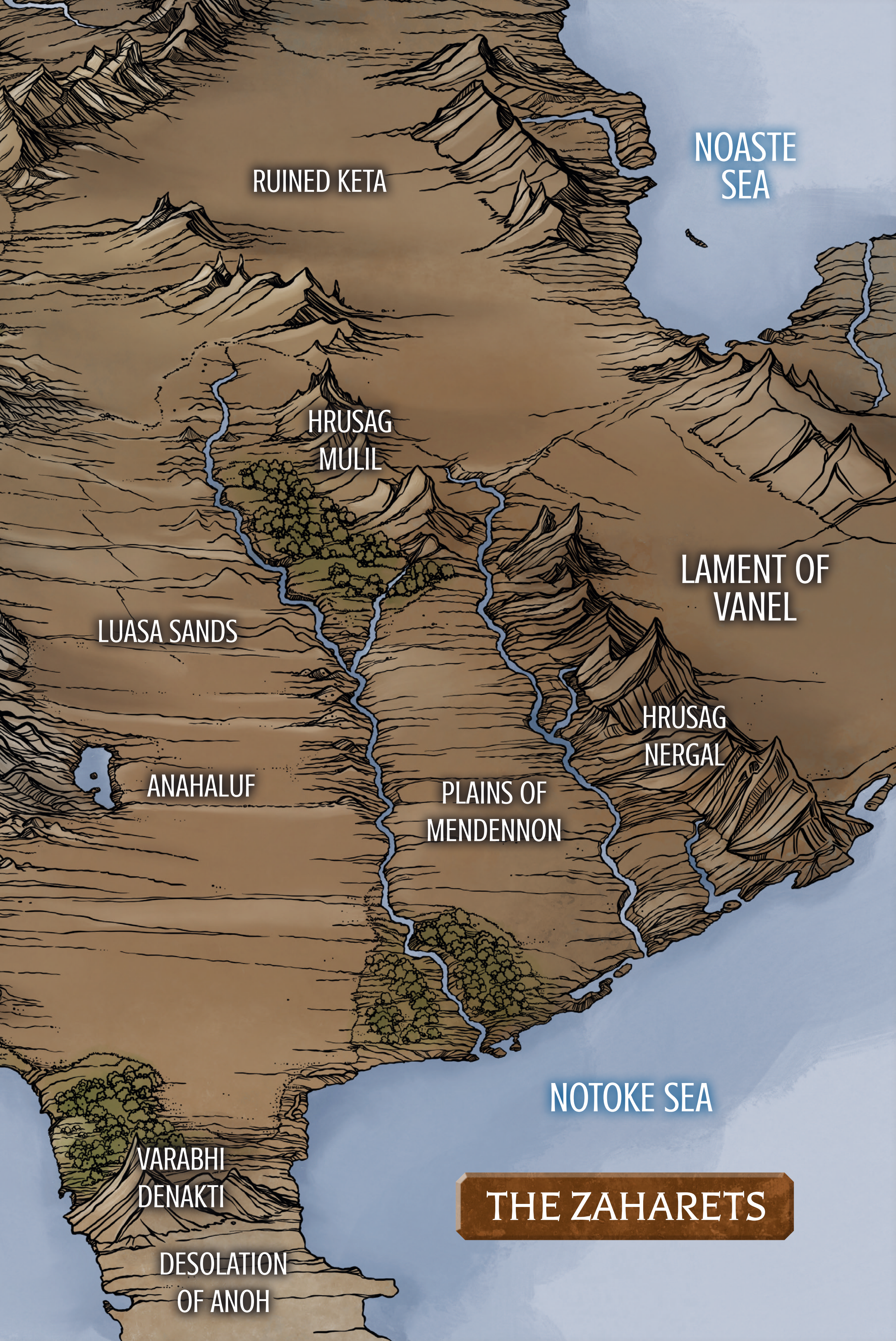
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HRUSAG MULIL
LAMENT OF VANEL
LUASA SANDS
HRUSAG NERGAL
ANAHALUF
PLAINS OF MENDENNON
NOTOKE SEA
VARABHI DENAKTI
THE ZAHARETS
DESOLATION OF ANOH

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> *Hear me, oh Kleo, oh wondrous guard of the annals of the world. I, Akraiatos of Escanoi, gifted with inquiry and a burden of his times, set pen to parchment so that the peoples and deeds of this age do not succumb, as those before them did, to the erosion of time. This is an age of heroes, of light and darkness, and of war. Herein I record the tales, stories, and reports gathered from across the arc of the world, so all will remember the follies and greatness of our age.*
>
> **~Akraiatos of Escanoi, *Travellers on the War Road*~**

Welcome to *Travellers on the War Road* (abbreviated hereafter to *Travellers*). Jackals occupy a liminal space in the world of the Zaharets – deeply rooted in their cultures yet standing apart from them. As they journey through their adventures, Jackals slowly give up their War Road wanderings to settle down, moving from the edges of society – where they defend their cultures from the chaotic forces found there – to its center, joining once again with those people who reviled them. To better understand this journey, and a Jackal's role in the Zaharets, a player must be familiar with their Jackal's culture.

Travellers is a resource for Loremasters and Jackals alike. It builds on the cultural overviews in Chapter 2 of Jackals, provides additional context and information for campaigning in the Land of Risings, and takes an in-depth look at the four core cultures of the Zaharets: the Luathi, the Gerwa, the Melkoni, and the Trauj. Within these pages is an examination of each culture's daily life, their gods, and their strongholds. At the end of each chapter, there are new rites for the core ritualist paths in the main book, as well as new talents, traits, and weapons for each of the cultures.

Read on, Jackal, and discover more of the War Road's secrets!

RULES FOR CULTURAL EQUIPMENT

Jackals may only purchase the equipment listed in this book from their respective cultures, as they are artefact that are typically not for sale to outsiders. LMs may allow Jackals to make a hard or extreme Culture (Other) check to convince a redsmith or merchant to sell them one such item for double the listed price in shekels! Items listed as (quest only) are available to Jackals of any culture who earn the right to use them.

RULES FOR NEW RITES

Players will likely want to access the new rites for their Jackal's ritualist path as soon as they can. Below are the rules for learning the new rites or selecting them during character creation.

LEARNING NEW RITES

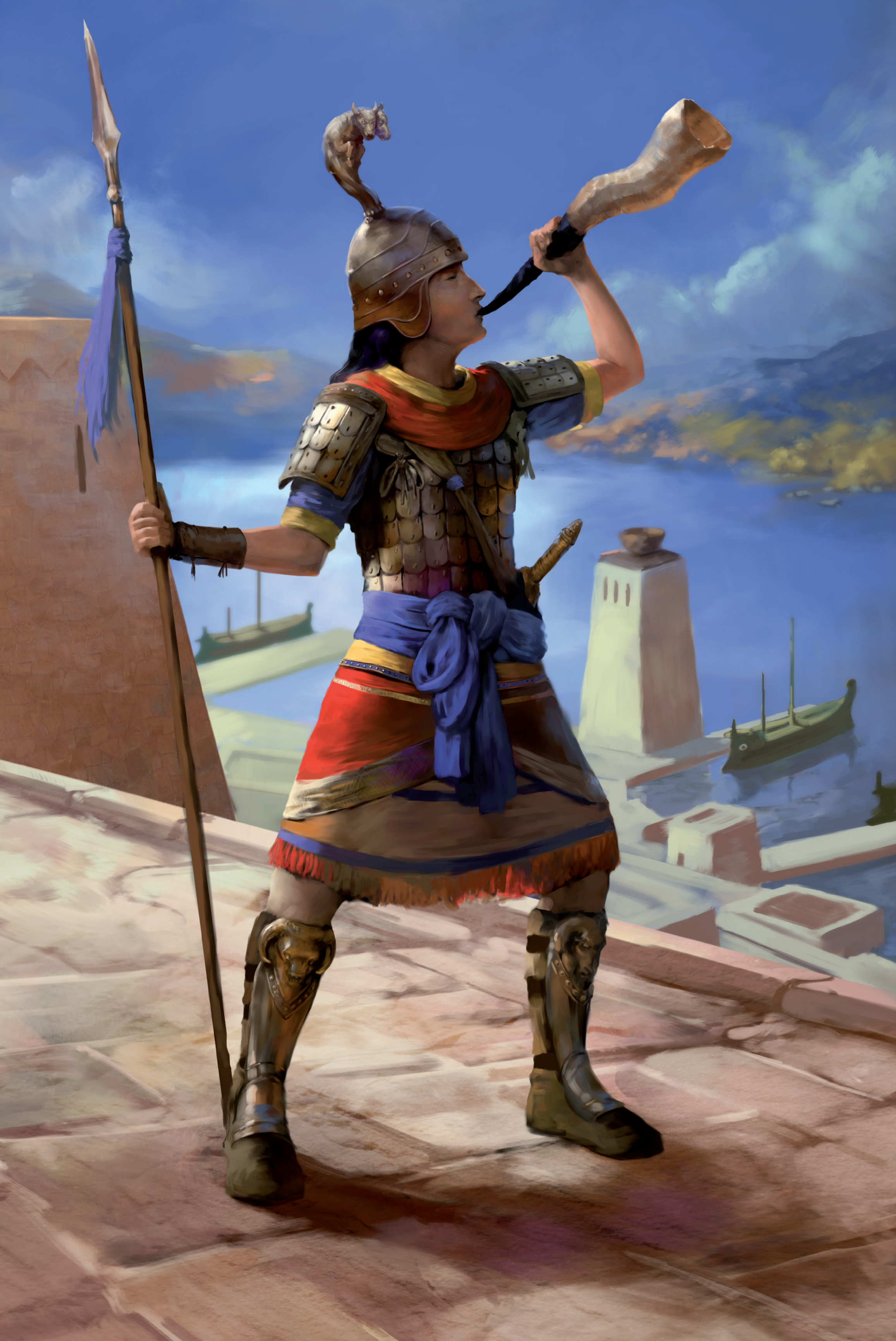
Jackals may, if they are in the correct location, spend an active advancement to learn a new rite (per the rules on *Jackals* page 106). The Jackal learns the rite in addition to any other seasonal action they take at the time. They may only learn one new rite in this way during any seasonal break. However, if a Jackal spends the advancement and takes the Research seasonal action, they may learn two rites during a single seasonal action.

DURING CHARACTER CREATION

Jackals may select any four rites from their chosen path at character creation. Loremasters have the discretion to limit which rites a Jackal may access based on their background and starting location. For example, the Temple of the Morning Lord near Sentem is the only place to learn the To Walk Through the Valley of the Silent Lands, and Fear Not Chaos rite (see page 33). If the Jackal in question is from Ameena Noani, the Loremaster may restrict this rite from their starting list. However, once a player chooses their Jackal's four initial rites, they may spend advancements on new rites, as usual.

RITE CLARIFICATION

The 'advancements' listed under each rite are intended to be accessible whenever a Jackal earns a talent for that rite. This is what is meant by 'or one their rite provides' on page 117 in the *Jackals* rulebook. Essentially, the advancements under a rite function the same way talents do for other skills. A Jackal must choose between taking a rite advancement or a rite talent when their skill in the rite reaches the appropriate thresholds.



CHAPTER 2

BOOK 1 – OF THE LUATHI AND ADAANSHUMMAR

And Shumma spoke to the peoples of the tribes: "Know, then, that Alwain is god. It is he who called you out of darkness and the oppression of the beasts. He called you to be his people and he will be our god. Be at peace and know that Alwain is the lord of the Luathi."

~From the *Book of Freedoms*~

The Luathi are a people who stand in the present with their eyes fixed firmly on the past. While one can admire their traditionalism and piety, virtues that we of Melkon aspire to, I would caution them only on this: those who walk backward into the future do not see the cliffs and pitfalls that lay along the path they travel.

~Akraiatos of Escanoi, *Travellers on the War Road, Book 1 -*
***Of the Luathi and Adaanshummar*~**

THE LUATHI – THE CHILDREN OF BRONZE

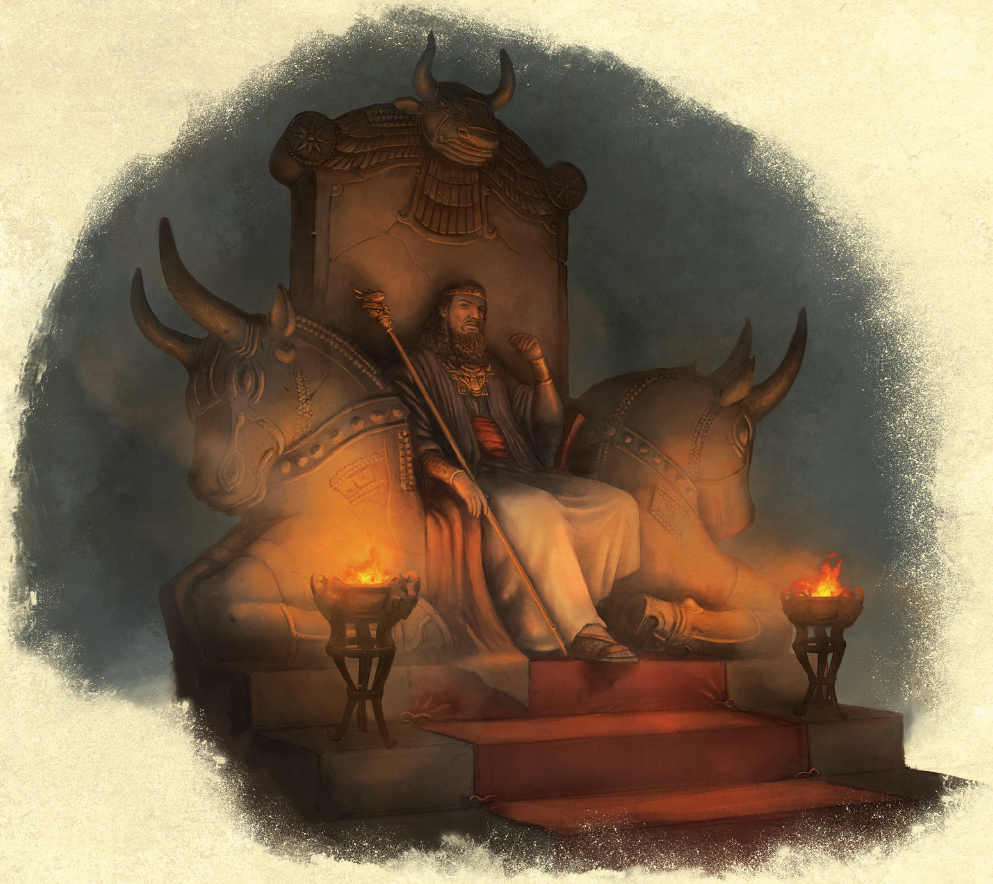
I begin this chronicle of the War Road's inhabitants with the Luathi, in the month of Samane, in the second year of the kingdom of Adaanshummar – a year some call 'The Year of Riders on the Clouds.' As I stand by my window, looking out over the city of Ameena Noani and the wine-dark sea in the distance, I am struck by the realisation that the Luathi tribes can finally say they inhabit the lands of the War Road. The kingdom of Adaanshummar now claims the land between the A'hule Asa mountains and the coast of the Futhetia sea; from the Vori Wastes in the north to the Johamma's Gap in the south. Within these boundaries, the Luathi continue their inter-tribal conflicts, struggling to bury past rivalries and present a united front to the throne and those who wait beyond for them to fall back into war.

Since their 'Unification War' ended a year ago, the Luathi have struggled to assert a cohesive presence in the Zaharets while attempting to heal scars from the war. If they are to survive as a people and a kingdom, the Luathi must rise together from the fall of the Children of Bronze. Here, a stranger in a strange land, I attempt to bring clarity to the rumors of these people that reach blessed Melkon. We Melkoni know our heritage, and many believe our culture shares roots with those here in the Zaharets. Sadly, if that belief holds true, the sands of history have swept over most of those foundations, burying them beyond our ability to recover – save for several obscure references in the Luathi's Shalapher. Perhaps someday, those of us who live in the lands of the fallen Grand Kingdoms will stand together. It would take a conflict beyond even that of the Unification War to cleave such a strange people to us.

Even as a casual observer, my time among these people has made it clear to me that family is at the core of Luathi life. Unlike the Melkoni and the Gerwa, who find our cultures and identities within the rites and rituals of our cities and legal codes, the Luathi cleave to tribes and family. It is common for three generations of the same Luathi family to live within a simple four-room home. Luathi of the same tribe are considered close kin, but before the founding of Adaanshummar those from other tribes were seen as barely Luathi. Malekh Sameel seeks to reforge the Luathi into one people, under the rule of their god, Alwain, and the throne of Adaanshummar. This tribal focus stems from the trauma of the Luathi's enslavement by the Takan; the Uprising, which saw two tribes destroyed; and the exodus, which removed three more tribes from the memory of the Zaharets. A Luathi's tribal affiliation is as important to them as being an Escanoi or an Illiuanan is to one of Melkon. While the Luathi claim there are seven tribes, to this chronicler's knowledge there are four major tribes of Luathi remaining in the Zaharets – Amar, Himeel, Omri, and Resh – with three, minor tribes – Geshrun, Hesson, and Meposepth – that shelter in the shadows of their greater brethren.

JUDGE, KAHAR, AND THRONE

The Luathi governmental authority rests in three 'anointed' positions: the judge, the priest or Kahar, and most recently, the Malekh – the one who holds the throne of Adaanshummar. The judges functioned as spiritual rulers, advisers, military commanders, and local authorities in the isolated towns along the War Road, and among the Luathi of Ameena Noani in the years after the Uprising. They still exist in this post-unification age, although the throne encounters issues with judges clashing with their will on a seasonal basis. Though the judges still nominally function as the legal and political bureaucracy of the kingdom, in practicality, they often see the throne's orders and commands as intruding on their authority and providence. Clashes between judges, their people, Jackals, and those under the authority of the throne of Adaanshummar are common throughout the War Road. If the kingdom is to survive, the Luathi must begin to see themselves as Adaanshummari, rather than a collection of tribal groupings under independent authority.



Above the judges – or parallel to them, depending on who you ask – are the Kahars. The Kahars are priests of Alwain, the Luathi's sole god; if any unity is to be found among the Luathi, it is because of them. Most are bound to a temple or altar, guiding their community and its people in the rites and rituals of Alwain, although some do take to the War Road as Jackals, spreading their god's words, power, and teachings beyond the tribes. Many, though not all, Kahars are from the Hesson tribe, who according to their *Shalapher* – as related to me by a Hesson Kahar – were chosen and set apart to be Luathi priests by Alwain and Shumma. The majority of the Hesson tribe travelled with Shumma when the prophetess left the Lands of Rising after the Uprising, making those who remain rebels of a sort. During the decades after the Uprising and the exodus, the rites of the Kahars spread out from the Hesson and were assimilated by the other tribes, although the Hesson remain the primary Kahars of the Zaharets. Much of a stationary Kahar's time revolves around caring for the altar of Alwain, tending to the sick and needy, and providing sacrifices for the Luathi. These sacrifices go beyond the propitiation of the individuals of the Pantheon or the compensatory and punitive sacrifices of the Six and the Eight of Ger. From praise offerings to absolution for crimes, the Luathi offer sacrifices for a multitude of reasons, days, and events. Their sacrifices and rituals, as detailed in the teachings of the Shalapher, combined with the oversight of the Kahars, truly bind the Luathi into a cohesive people. This order of sacrifices also supports the local Kahars, who partake in portions of the meals the Luathi offer to their god.

Finally, above all this, exists the newest Luathi institution, that of the throne of Adaanshummar. The Bull Throne, as it has begun to be called, is an ancient seat from the time of the Grand Kingdoms. It remained empty in the Fortress of Gilead for over a century, until the Unification War ended and it was pulled free from the vaults beneath the fortress and set once again in the throne room as the symbol of authority. Malekh Sameel holds this throne, and he spends much of his time in this city of the bull attempting to solidify the new kingdom he won. He gathered a court of advisers, bodyguards, and loyalists about him. These *Ish Bahur* – or Chosen Ones, who in older days were known as the Thirty – are a group of warriors who now serve the Bull Throne directly. Loyal Jackals, proud warriors, and legends among all cultures of the Zaharets, they travel in groups and gather their own warriors about them, in direct service to Sameel and the Bull Throne. Sameel also assembled his council from the Kahars of the Luathi, the Hasheers of the Scriptorium, and Jackals from along the War Road. His primary advisers are Toara of the Hasheers and Kahar Nabal.

Toara, the *Roshasheer*, stands on Sameel's left as his adviser. The chief among all the Hasheers of the Luathi's Scriptorium, I have met few in the circle of the world with a mind and knowledge such as hers. As curator and inheritor of the knowledge her order has gathered, Toara is a rare person in the Zaharets. I enjoyed many nights speaking with her over roasted lamb or wandering the Scriptorium's upper vaults as she explained some lost piece of lore from the Grand Kingdoms or the ancient Hann. Her wisdom guides Sameel as he forges a new kingdom, and it will perhaps help him build order from the chaos of the last decades.

Sameel placed Nabal at his right hand, as high priest over all the Kahars of Alwain. Nabal splits his time each season between the Temple of Alwain in Ameena Noani and the Temple of the Morning Lord in the South. Slowly, but surely, Nabal is drawing the Kahars into a cohesive order, so they do not have to act individually to shepherd and guide the people. It will take decades to complete this task, but Nabal has a vision – guided, he says, by the hand of his god – of a unified Luathi temple order that stretches the length of the new kingdom. Despite the hours we have shared in the presence of this new king and his court, Nabal remains an enigma to me. The man keeps to himself, yet he is always watching those about him as though he knows the secrets of their lives and of the world. It is unsettling, and I am uncertain as to the influence he holds over the king.

I cannot say what the future of the War Road holds. Only Araton knows whether the Luathi of Adaanshummar possess the resilience of spirit to stand together. Though they threw off their physical chains, the Luathi still bear the scars of captivity on their souls. A wise ruler could heal the scars, while a tyrant would enslave them anew with fetters the Luathi fashion from their own fears.

WHAT IS ADAANSHUMMAR?

If you have not read or played through *Fall of the Children of Bronze*, you may be confused by the references to a unified Luathi kingdom. The campaign in F*all of the Children of Bronze* details the nine years of the Unification War – which led up to the formation of Adaanshummar that now occupies the lands of Ameena Noani, Sentem, and the coastal plain between them – and the crowning of a Malekh/Malekeh (king/queen) of the Luathi. If you have not played through *Fall of the Children of Bronze* – or have yet to start it – do not fear! The information in this chapter, while referencing Adaanshummar, is relevant and pertinent to all Luathi Jackals, no matter the era. This is especially true of the mechanical information and the discussions of Luathi culture, rites, and rituals.

MY CAMPAIGN ENDED DIFFERENTLY

That is OK! While this book assumes Sameel and the Jackals led Sentem to victory, this is not the only possible ending to the *Fall of the Children of Bronze* campaign. Perhaps Malekeh Phamea, another NPC, or even a former Jackal is on the throne, rather than Malekh Sameel. Adjust the aftermath of the Unification War in your campaign, as necessary. Yes, Sameel favors the southern part of the War Road and Phamea the north, but both gather similar warriors and advisers. Soon, others will take notice of the Bull Throne and the rulers will change. Upcoming adventures address the passing of current rulers and the shape of things to come.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A LUATHI

Most begin the day at dawn, with morning prayers to Alwain as his chariot mounts the sky. These may take place in the home, at a local open-air altar, or within one of the temples in a major city. The most common prayer uttered at this time is a poem of Nabal from the *Shalapher*:

Lord, hear my plea at night
'Who is like you?'
You sit in judgment over the earth
In the day, your chariot arcs above it.

Its light, your law, illuminates
The dark corners of the earth
As well as the hearts and minds
Of all its inhabitants

At night, your daughters, and their servants
Arrayed in beauty and might
Watch over the sleeping world
Oura, see me!

Gai, shelter me!
Kauma, shield me!
Lord of the heavens,
Send your servants to hedge me in

For my enemy hunts and seeks to snare me
Darkness is his lair, the night is his home
He scoffs as he raises his hand
Against your chosen servant

Rise, oh Lord, mount your chariot
Rush out of the eastern gates with the dawn
Bring salvation to me with your mighty hand
Shelter your humble servant.

And I will sing your praises in the lands of the living
In the Silent Lands I will bow before you
All will know of your saving power
All will join with me in following your commands.

This prayer rises from the streets and buildings of Ameena Noani each morning, a near collective din ascending to their god and calling the rest of us to wakefulness with them. A truly barbaric practice. After offering obeisance and praise to Alwain, the Luathi begin their day. For most along the War Road, this is spent herding or working in the fields that dot the verdant coastal plain, where they watch over their fields and flocks and chase wild beasts away from their families and herds with staff and sling. The pastoral psalmists of the Luathi spend their days composing new poetic hymns to their god. The most prolific of these poets follow in the tradition of Nabal, the author of the morning prayer above. The Luathi poetic style lacks the subtlety and technical expertise of the Melkoni epic verse, relying instead on parallelism and a repetition of thoughts and ideas in paired verses. There is a simple beauty to it, despite its lack of rhyme or meter.

The Luathi share simple meals with whomever is nearby throughout the day; these meals consist of figs, honey, shalla fruit, olives, and bread prepared early in the morning and taken with them to be eaten as the day allows. After sunset, Luathi families gather for their only shared meal of the day, which typically consists of roasted meat – seasoned with salt and Baharat and prepared over a smoldering fire – along with dates, almonds, pomegranates, and more bread and honey. The day ends, shared in relative seclusion from the outside world, as they share stories, tales, and news.

Toara told me about a specific taboo of the Luathi people, known as 'waking yammim.' It is a cultural phrase that holds a variety of meanings and is used to describe violence against kin, acting with wild abandon, or even cursing others with evil. As I spoke with Hasheers and Kahars, it became clear to me that this phrase is truly about undermining the Law of Alwain. To 'awaken yammim' is to act in a way that invites into the community the chaos the Luathi believe Alwain opposes and restrains, or to work against and undermine the deeds and ordinances of the *Shalapher*. One interesting aspect of 'waking yammim' is the taboo against touching the dead, which renders the Luathi ritualistically tainted by chaos, perhaps cthonically touched. There is no greater admonishment in the Luathi tongue, save perhaps the Takan curse 'seklah,' which means 'meat' in all its variety of connotations.

One final note on the daily rituals of the Luathi. There is a proverb among the people of the War Road, "*the Luathi seek water as fervently as the Trauj, but they hoard it only to watch it fall on the ground.*" While this is an exaggeration, the typical Luathi does hold to strict, ritual bathing practices throughout the day. There are bronze basins filled with water throughout each city. Merchants, common folk, and children alike dip their hands into these basins as they walk by and then pass the water over their faces. The basins are filthy by the end of the day, and the Kahars make the journey throughout the cities each night to replenish the basins with clean water for the next day. It is a strange custom to be sure, one rooted in their sacred text – the *Shalapher* – which contains, among other commands, rituals for washing, eating, taboos, and sacrifices.

HOLY FESTIVALS

Shumma, the Luathi's first judge and prophet, established a schedule of days to set apart for feasts, festivals, and tribal-wide sacrifices. Beyond even the sacred days of the Pantheon, the Luathi holy festivals take up weeks of the year! What nonsense is that? What sort of god demands his people put down sword, shovel, and shear to lose nearly a month every year to sacrifices, rites, and remembrances? Many in Ger believe the Luathi are soft and lazy because of this, a sentiment with which I do not agree, after seeing the events of the last war play out. While their religion seems strange compared to the ordered rule of Araton and the Pantheon, it is clear the Luathi do not suffer for their excess of festivals. The main Luathi festivals are Heroth, Reshpar, Mekinok, and Udalwan.

HEROTH

2nd Udsar – 2nd Udaqara of Isten

A week-long celebration of the Uprising and the gifting of the Shalapher. The Luathi mark this festival by spending the entire week outside, vacating their homes to remember their time in captivity. From sunrise to sunset, the Luathi stay in the streets, set up small tents outside their cities, or live on the roofs of their houses. The most devout Luathi often leave the towns and cities to dwell in the true wilderness of the Zaharets. Either way, the Luathi spend the week living in the wilderness, searching for Takan, and bonding as a community with several large, communal sacrifices. They offer these sacrifices, usually unblemished bulls, three times each day. At dawn, noon, and dusk, the Kahars present hymns, psalms, and the bulls as offerings to Alwain. The *Shalapher* commands this as the first and most important of the Luathi festivals, for "*By these days and seasons shall you remind your children of my steadfast presence and of your covenant with me. These sacrifices you shall make for the transgressions of your tribes and peoples, and when you inhabit the land in its fullness, for your kingdoms.*"

RESHPAR

2nd Udsar of Salas & 1st Udoura of Sebe

Also referred to as the Feasts of First Foundings and of Promises (respectively), the Luathi gather their harvests for the seasons at these times. Each Reshpar lasts for three days – from dawn on the first day until sunset on the third day. The Luathi gather their harvests and present portions as sacrifices and offerings at the local temple to Alwain. They leave the last ten per cent of their fields unharvested, a remainder for the poor, the aliens, and the widows among them. The Kahars say the purpose of these festivals is to remember the first years after the Uprising, when the Luathi struggled to find purchase in the Zaharets. Many starved during this time, and Shumma's laws that govern the feast dictate the Luathi must not only remember this time, but also ensure the vulnerable in their land do not suffer the same fate.

MEKINOK & HATSAA

2nd Udafuth of Salas & 3rd Udkauma of Samane

Mekinok and Hatsaa are equinoctial feasts the Luathi, Melkoni, and Trauj celebrate. Toara of the Hasheers and I believe this holy day was handed down from the era of the Hulathi's Grand Kingdoms. Though we recall little from those days, we do know the Hulathi worshipped Hesoman as the true and most high god – and their ruins and artifacts confirm the sun motif was prominent in Lukka, as well as in Sardon. All three kingdoms typically plant the seasonal harvests during these festivals. Additionally, the festivals are punctuated by offerings to the rulers of the lands: Alwain for the Luathi, Araton for the Melkoni, and the high ancestors among the tribes of the Trauj.

UDALWAN

1st Udoura of Sedis

The holiest of all Luathi celebrations, Udalwan is a high holy day set aside to Alwain. It takes place during summer solstice, on the first day of the Festival of Revelation – a festival that recalls the moment Shumma ascended Mount Mihshalnim, a holy mountain in the A'hule Asa, to meet with Alwain for the first time. There, she received her commission to free the Luathi from the Takan, as well as the promise that the Luathi would inhabit and claim the Land of Risings. This day celebrates Alwain drawing near to the Luathi once again and focuses on two major sacrifices. The first is of the Cleansing, a ritual re-dedication of the Kahars to prepare them for their new year of service to Alwain. The second is that of the Atonement, when the Hesson Kahars throughout the Luathi tribes offer blood and meat to Alwain and ask him to forgive their transgressions. To this day, the stories among the Kahar – supplementary to the scrolls of the *Shalapher* – tell how Shumma spent two years in the Luasa Desert after the meeting on the mountain, wandering the fields of sand, communing with Alwain, and preparing for her task. There, she was tormented by seven great rathic, each sent by *Imil-Ajas* to prevent her from completing her appointed task. Shumma defeated these rathic through her communion with Alwain, who sent supernatural aid in the form of three cherubim. The Festival of Revelation, which takes place immediately after Udalwan, recalls these trials; each day focuses on sacrifices to Alwain and exorcism rites to keep the seven servants of the north away for another year.

LUATHI JACKALS

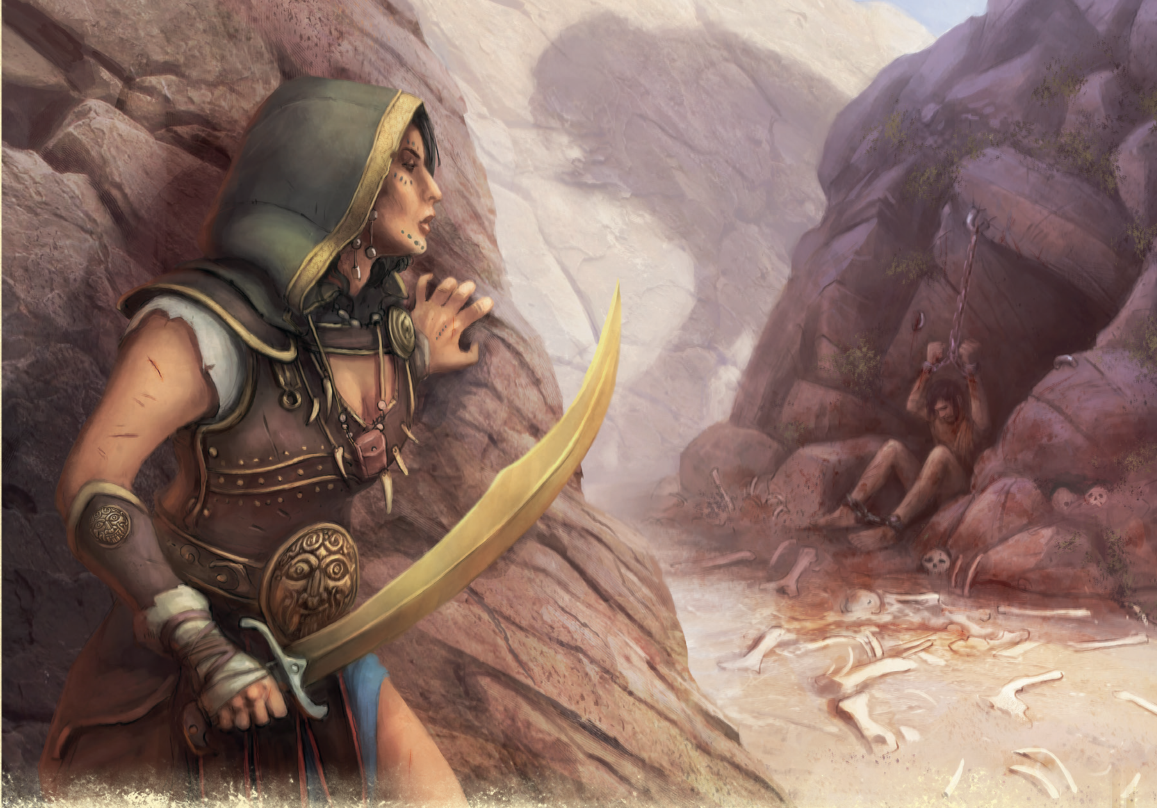
What then, we must ask, might cause a Luathi to turn away from this cycle of seasons, festivals, and families and turn to the War Road to become obeurim? We Melkoni know that passion and *kleos* drive our Jackals, but it took this humble scribe several seasons among these people to arrive at the answer to this question, for it seems the typical reasons hold no sway over the Luathi heart. There are three main reasons a Luathi may leave the shelter of their family and tribe and take up a Jackal's spear and shield: they receive a call, they have a desire for knowledge, or they are forced to seek refuge.

A CALL

There are many among the Luathi ranks who hear the voice of their god calling them out into the wilderness for various purposes. Some seek to push the Takan further back, while others claim they were raised up for a specific time or reason. Others feel the call to commune with Alwain in the wilderness, and naturally gravitate to the itinerant life of the Jackal. Many in Ameena Noani share the story of just such a Jackal, who served Sentem in the war. Alwain called Dabar, a shepherd, while he was tending his flocks in the Aeco Plains. Dabar received the call from the Heavens to take up the spear and shield and stand against Alwain's enemies. The tale says Dabar felt led to a nearby cave, where he discovered weapons and armour the Hulathi had crafted ages ago. This simple shepherd went on to stand with the *Ish Bahur* before falling during the siege of Tjaru. It is said his body was carried north with Sameel and now lies buried beneath the throne room of Gilead. Local stories claim Dabar still watches over the king and, at some point, will return to aid the kingdom once again. This is a strange departure from the typical Alwainistic view of the dead and departed.

A DESIRE

A rapacious desire for knowledge blooms among the Luathi. Stripped of home, land, and identity by Barak Barad's Takan, the Luathi hunger to restore their losses. Some become possessed by this desire – many Hasheers bear this fever – and head out into the wilds to delve the ancient sites of the Hann and the Hulathi, search for traces of their brethren who left with Shumma, or simply push back the boundaries of the world. These Jackals set out to seek what was lost and discover what lies over the next horizon.



A REFUGE

Some Jackals are forced to take to the War Road, at least for a time. Phamaiel, a Kahar with whom I became quite close during my stay in Ameena Noani brought to my attention a strange passage in the *Shalapher*: "*In the days when you settle in the land, if someone strikes a fellow Child of Bronze and kills them, that one shall be slain before the sight of the people. However, if the strike that causes the other to fall is accidental, or done in a moment of passion, I have appointed a path to shelter you from the innocent blood that cries out to me. In that day, the one who lives shall sever themselves from the people for three years. They shall head into the desolate places and stand as a watchman for me and for the people, as an atonement for the chance slaying. Should they return to the people before the allotted time, a kinsmen of the slain may avenge themselves upon them in my eyes. However, after this time, they may draw near once more to the people, and after the sacrifice of Atonement for the year, they are declared innocent in my eyes. For I am Alwain.*" As strange as it may seem to this Melkoni, a Luathi may take on the life of a Jackal to hide in the wilderness from the hand of a blood debt.

Luathi Jackals inevitably develop their own versions of the rites and celebrations of their people. Simple washing rituals and incense offerings replace the traditional daily rites. If the pack is fortunate enough to contain a Kahar, they gather the wayward Luathi Jackals and provide for their spiritual needs. If the pack finds itself in a Luathi stronghold during one of the festivals, they typically join in and spend their well-earned shekels to add to the feast. However, if the Jackal in question is under the oath of refuge, they will keep to themselves or even break from the pack to maintain their oath and protection.

LUATHI HISTORY

Much of what is known of Luathi 'history' extends back to only the last century or so. The Takan kingdom of Barak Barad – known in the Luathi texts as the Kingdom of Ignorance – dominated this land, enslaving the Luathi people and crushing their spirits, their culture, and their flesh with a singular brutality. So firm was their grip on the Land of Risings that even the knowledge about the Melkoni and Gerwa of this time is a pit filled with deceptive vipers and darkness. What the inhabitants of the Land of Risings do know is that the prophetess Shumma arose in the slave pits of Barak Barad. A child of Hesson, she was plagued by visions from a god she did not know. The Takan forced the Luathi, and all within the borders of their kingdom, to worship the vile spirits of their kind. They forced obeisance, forging fetters of sacrifice for the Luathi souls and fetters of bronze for their flesh. The cries of the Luathi reached up to Alwain, who remembered his people, and the hand of Alwain fell upon Shumma and bore her away to the crown of Mihshalnim, where she communed with Alwain. Why Alwain withdrew from his chosen people and allowed them to be subjugated to the Takan is a mystery I fail to grasp. Phamaiel attempted to explain it – apparently the story is buried deep within the *Beginnings*, the first of the Three Scrolls, but for one such as I, and as deep in my cups as I was at that point, it remains obscured.

After her trials and struggles in the wilderness, Shumma returned to her people, blessed by Alwain, and spoke to the gathered Luathi elders. She shared the revelation of Alwain, the promises of aid from on high, and demonstrated Alwain's powers through a series of miracles. Thus began the Uprising, the great contest between Alwain and the Luathi against the Takan and their spirits. In the end, the Kahars of Alwain, led by Shumma, broke the Takan defences and smote their king – the Mavakan Ogfan – tore down their high places, and drove the Takan from the Zaharets. Shumma was not satisfied with this victory and claimed the purpose of the Uprising was an exodus from the Zaharets into lands of promise, which Alwain would show the Luathi. However, fear gripped the hearts of the victors, who were only recently slaves, and only three of the tribes left with Shumma. The remainder claimed Ameena Noani as their city and began the process of building a new people from the ranks of slaves. Thus, the Land of Risings opened once again for the kingdoms of humanity, and the Children of Bronze claimed the lands of their captors.

From Ameena Noani, the Luathi chased the Takan back into the A'hule Asa, the Vori Wastes, and beyond. New towns sprung up as the circle of law grew out from the City of the Bulls. The Sars of Ameena Noani saw the benefits to occupying the old Hulathi watchtowers, and they soon formed the eastern and western barriers to expansion. All the lands between Orsem Honess and Orsem Yahan belonged to the Luathi; but not all were satisfied. Stories tell of how Yesim – the youngest son of Merari, the Sari of Ameena Noani at that time – was cast out of the city by his elder brother, Nimrot, in their 40th year after Nimrot ascended to Sar. It is said Yesim's murder of a young shepherdess who was betrothed to Nimrot was the reason for this betrayal, but Phamaiel related a pair of apocryphal tales. In the first, Yesim took the oath of refuge (see page 41) when he accidentally slayed his brother's betrothed while they were hunting Takan. In the other, it was Nimrot who slew his betrothed in a pique of madness when he found her speaking privately to Yesim, and then threw his brother on the altar of slander. Whatever the reason, Yesim took the oath of refuge, left the lands of Ameena Noani, travelled far to the south, and established his exilic fortress of Sentem. For the better part of a century, the two great cities seemed to ignore each other, focused instead on their tribal squabbles, the ever-present threat of the Takan, and their efforts to expand the circle of law to allow trade to once again flow through the War Road. Only during the Year of Shattered Bastions, some 40 years ago, did the two states aid each other to destroy the Black Tree Tribe's hording, which threatened to split the War Road again.

THE UNIFICATION WAR

Traditionally, prior to the establishment of the throne, the Luathi were divided into three groupings – those of Ameena Noani, those of Sentem, and those of the independent towns on the War Road. On the War Road's northern and southern ends stood the cities of Ameena Noani and Sentem, both of which gathered smaller towns into the folds of their dominions. The towns along the central War Road were too distant to be of great concern, at least until the Sars of Ameena Noani took notice of Sentem's tin deposits. While some few were shocked at the events of the last decade, the war among the Luathi – to this humble chronicler – was inevitable. Both cities at the ends of the War Road established themselves as independent Luathi powers. Even in my homeland of Melkon, the cities war against each other for a variety of reasons, but those are tales for another time. To assume that what happens in blessed Melkon could not occur elsewhere is ignorance and folly. It is ever in the nature of humanity to seek honor, safety, and self-interest, and these motives always lead us to war. So it was on the War Road – Ameena Noani and Sentem, despite all that would bind them together, went to war out of fear and interest. Ameena Noani, seeking independence from the Vori Wastes and its bronze production, as well as the deleterious effects of the Wastes' dust upon the gatherers and redsmiths that handled it, looked with envy upon the mines of Mayrah Vedil. Sentem, fearing an invasion from the north, began to prepare for war. The Aeco Plains, where generations of wars were fought in antiquity, would become the battlefield between the two city-states. Blood watered the green fields around the ancient Gerwa citadel of Tjaru, as Luathi spilled the blood of their cousins and brothers, until Sameel emerged victorious. The end of the war saw the cleaving of all Luathi cities and towns under the kingdom of Adaanshummar – the Lands of Shumma.

Enthroned in Ameena Noani, among rumors of moving the throne to Tjaru, Sameel received the blessing of the Kahars as the anointed champion of Alwain, in accordance with rites from the Book of Rites in the Shalapher. Shumma, whether in wisdom or inevitability, apparently provided for the possibility of a Luathi Malekh. The towns in the north hold a simmering resentment of this southern interloper, yet they submit to his rule. Sameel holds the loyalty of the Kahars, Hasheers, and judges from all tribes, which grants him authority in the eyes of the northern Luathi. Sameel and his *Ish Bahur* reclaimed the newly cleansed city of Eridu in the south – once the Takan ruin of Barak Barad – which provides a southern anchor to the kingdom. As it is being rebuilt, it has become home to members of the Resh and Omri tribes that want to create a new life, the Trauj who helped take the city, and Gerwa merchants who wish to trade with the new kingdom. Perhaps in a decade it will grow to be as important to the Bull Throne as Ameena Noani and Tjaru.

This is the dawn of the new kingdom, yet it is uncertain what the future holds for this land. Whether Sameel and the line of Yesim are worthy of the kingship, and whether he can keep the tribes of the Luathi together, remains to be seen.

THE FOUR TRIBES

Unlike the Melkoni and the Gerwa, who bear allegiance primarily to the city of their birth and the gods of their forefathers, the primary identity of the Luathi is grounded in their tribal affiliation and identity. As I mentioned before, there are four major Luathi tribes in the Zaharets, and while they do all possess fixed tribal lands, one can find Luathi of all tribes scattered among the towns and cities of the War Road. In my effort to provide a comprehensive background on the state of the War Road and the Land of Risings, I will relate the knowledge I have gleaned about these four tribes.

AMAR

The largest of the northern tribes – though still smaller than the Resh, if Sameel's first census is to be believed – the Amar grasped and held Ameena Noani in the days following the Uprising. Nehanu, Shumma's successor, was of the Amar; it was under his leadership that the Amar and the Himeel pushed the Takan back and carved out the first Luathi city-state. The Amar have ruled Ameena Noani and the north for generations, and every Sar of the city save one has been from this tribe. Those in the north see the Amar as just and fair rulers who created a bastion of order for the Luathi from the chaos that followed the fall of Barak Barad. Though Sar Phamea was deposed at the end of the Unification War, I have heard whispers and seen Rumour walk among the streets of this fair city on multiple occasions, promising that Phamea and the Amar have not forgotten the people of Ameena Noani – and I fear Sameel does not take these whispers seriously. If the kingdom is to survive, he must bind the Amar to himself – or break them. Among the Luathi, the Amar are known for two things: their laws and their ships. The Code of Eldah Na-Amar is a comprehensive code of laws that bind the northern cities to Ameena Noani, which Adaanshummar ubiquitously adopted. While few Luathi have the skill or the desire to take to the wine-dark sea, those who ply this trade on the waters of the Futhetia are Amar. Many refer to travelling on an Amar ship as, "t*aking the leap from Noani.*"

HIMEEL

The appointed lands of the Himeel lie to the south of Ameena Noani, beginning at the southern bank of the Asa Amwa and extending down to the old fortress of Tjaru. The Himeel traditionally remain apart from the Amar lands north of the river and the Resh lands in the south. Because their lands are suitable for pastures and large herds, the Himeel shepherds and herders supply tribes to the north and the south with meat for eating and sacrifices, as well as hides and other goods. Forsaking the traditions of the city-states to the north and the south, the Himeel occupy their land only as needed, spending much of the year in the rolling coastal plains tending to and following the herds. Several small towns dot the plains, providing shelter from beasts and Takan when they come down out of the mountains. The Himeel pastoral poets are considered among the best of the Luathi traditions; they spend much of their time alone in the plains, contemplating the land, their herds, and their god. They rely on judges and Jackals to deal with issues that arise in their lands, and they trade heavily with the Trauj, by way of the Wuma Ejo. As such, the Himeel have started to incorporate horses into their herds, which may one day allow the Luathi to take to the plains mounted on the lesser breeds the Trauj trade to them.

RESH

The Resh are the largest of all the Luathi tribes. Their traditional lands are those of the Yesimal family and Sentem. The broad, fertile earth at the southern end of the War Road – between the Aeco Plains and the Johamma's Gap – is well-suited to supporting the large tribe. The *Shalapher* speaks highly of the leaders and members of the Tribe of Resh, to the point that one begins to question Shumma's profession that she was born among the Hesson. Many of the passages – which, in the short time Sameel has been on the throne, have risen in popular sayings – declare that one day, one of the Resh will be sword and shield, branch and crown for the Luathi people. Phamaiel considers these promises a prophecy concerning the rise of Adaanshummar and believes this is a sign of the blessing of the Heavens. We Melkoni know the dangers of putting too much trust in the uttering of oracles, for did not our oracle at Pythen tell the great king, Kronnos, "*If you go to war, you will destroy a great city?*" The city she spoke of was the king's own! However, the Luathi who cleave to Sameel see his forging of a kingdom as a fulfillment of this promise. Those in the north view the Resh as uncultured, brutish cousins, who now hold the whips of the king. Among their own, the Resh maintain a fierce tradition of war, honed by the time they spent carving out Sentem, Densom, and other towns on the southern end of the War Road. They tend toward directness – not out of arrogance, but out of a need for decisiveness, and bred from their years on the War Road.

OMRI

The Omri are the smallest of the great Luathi tribes. Were it not for the fact they hold the lands around Mayrah Vedil, it is likely they would be subsumed into the Resh. The Omri are renowned for an abundance of left-handed warriors and slingers of great skill, as they can bring down the beasts of the War Road with a preternatural accuracy. The traditional – or 'assigned', according to the *Shalapher* – lands of the Omri lie in the shadow of the A'hule Asa mountains, just south of Tjaru. The Omri were much larger two generations ago, but were culled by their fellow Luathi. The story goes that during a ritual circuit of the Omri lands, a group of Omri attacked and killed a Hesson Kahar named Noam for reasons unknown. The Hesson are sacrosanct under Shummanic law, so when the Resh and the Himeel heard of this act, they demanded vengeance for the Kahar and her retinue. The Omri refused to turn the attackers over to the judgment of the tribes, as they were children of a great Resh judge and the Omri feared their father would pardon them. The Resh and the Himeel sought the council of their god, who commanded them to slay the inhabitants of the Omri city of Chemish. The Resh gathered to defend their kin. Thousands of Luathi died in the siege of Chemish; in their battle lust, the hosts of the Resh and the Himeel slew all Omri men above the age of thirty-five. So great was their outrage, the city of Chemish lies in ruins to this day. Later, fearing another Luathi tribe would disappear from the arc of the world, the Yesimals of Sentem sent the entirety of their third and fourth sons of the Resh to the Omri women, to be taken as husbands and to father children for the Omri tribe. Thus, to this day, the Omri are tightly bound to the Resh.

ALWAINISM

One cannot speak of a people without speaking of their gods and beliefs. One may believe that because the Luathi have but one god, it should be easy to define their faith and beliefs, but this is not the case. As I mentioned before, Luathi spiritual practices are highly ritualised, deeply ingrained in their daily lives, and foundational to any understanding of their culture. The Luathi believe they exist only because of the grace and hand of Alwain, who heard their cries as they ascended from Barak Barad. Alwain sent Shumma and revealed himself to the Luathi elders and tribes, and it was by his power the Uprising succeeded. Still, there is a divide in the *psukhē* of the Luathi. They arose from the ruins of Barak Barad, only to be called by Alwain to the south, toward lands they did not know. For those who remain, there is a constant temptation to view all events of the kingdom – good or bad – as blessings or curses as a result of ignoring Shumma's call. A minority even contemplate leaving their new kingdom to follow Shumma south. Such a judge arises every season, and a small group travels with them, although the path Shumma took long ago is now lost to the Luathi.

Alwainism is the worship and veneration of Alwain as creator of the world and the most high god. According to the passages I have read in the first scroll of the *Shalapher*, Alwain created the world from the body of the sea and with his voice, and he set the divine council of the stars, moons, and sun in the sky. He caused the earth to bring forth its bounty; commanded the animals to fill the sea, skies, and land; and finally, created humanity from the dust of the earth. Through events of which the Kahars are circumspect to speak, the great tribes of humanity – from which all current kingdoms descend and that thrived in a land lost long ago – broke through into the Zaharets. A trio of catastrophic events destroyed the lands of their birth and forced them into the Land of Risings: the Shrouding, the Deluge, and the Raising. Indeed, the Luathi scroll of *Beginnings*, in addition to relating battles like the Melkoni epic, the *Gigamachiad*, speaks of a time when seven great tribes of humanity were joined. I have had the opportunity to study this section of their scrolls in depth, and among the names of the tribes is a group called the Sempth. As any Melkoni raised among the philosophers of Escanoi would recognise, Sempth is close to Sempethaon, the first man and first priest of Araton. Melkoni texts speak of Araton raising the Melkoni people from the stones of the mountains, so it is strange to find Sempatheon's name in this foreign text. Whether it is but a tale to explain the relationship between the Luathi and other peoples of the world, or a hint of some deeper truth, I do not know.

The altars of Alwain reside either in outdoor temples on hills and mountains, or within temples such as those found in Ameena Noani or Sentem. Strangely, the Luathi temples and shrines bear no images of Alwain. They are commanded not to represent their god in physical form, and all places one might expect to see an image of a god are strangely bare. I once made the jest of worshiping a god so malformed as to demand no images be displayed, and Phamaiel grew grave. She shared that the proscription came from the Shalapher, as humanity itself bears Alwain's image – the Kahars are the image of Alwain in the temples and shrines, and it is the responsibility of all to bear his image out into the world. This is nonsense, of course, as it would mean the souls of all humanity are equal in the eyes of the Luathi god. It is a strange reason not to represent your god's images in a temple, but the Luathi are a strange people.

COSMOLOGY

The Luathi possess a complex understanding of the world and its metaphysics, not unlike that of the Melkoni or the Gerwa, but with several key differences. We all understand the earth of the world is bound about on all sides by the waters below – Akazu to the Luathi and Oceanus to the Melkoni – and sheltered beneath the dome of the heavens. Within the dome fly the celestial bodies: the chariots of the sun and moon, messengers of the gods, and birds of the air. The seas of the waters below flow into the great abyss beneath the world. There, they join with the river Shelah – Ikkora to the Melkoni – which marks the boundary between the lands of the living and the lands where the dead reside. Strangely, while the Luathi poetic tradition holds to an existence after death – in the Silent Lands, as they call it – they do not possess a refined understanding of what occurs there. Unlike ancestors and glory among the Trauj or the courts of Anu or Hakides in the west, the Luathi faith focuses on this life, with little regard for the next. While the *Shalapher* speaks of two paths – one of life and one of death – and how one travels along the path of life by following Alwain's Laws, it is unclear as to what exactly these laws are. This ambiguity would not be enough for this soul. Vague references to those in the Silent Lands being alive after death, or of Alwain as the god of the living – but linked to the names of dead patriarchs and matriarchs – prove to this chronicler some texts are better studied by philosophers and priests rather than historians. It is clear from my many clarifying discussions with Phamaiel, though, that the Luathi do not believe the souls of the dead return to the living lands – either by powerful magics, rituals, or after enjoying their reward or suffering their punishment from their actions in this life. They view all such beliefs as abominations before the eyes of their god.

Luathi revere Alwain as the most high god, but the *Shalapher* acknowledges that in addition to claiming the Luathi as his people, Alwain set a divine council over all the other peoples of the world. These gods, including the heavenly bodies, rule over the nations of the earth – much like the blessed Pantheon of Melkon or the Six and the Eight of the Gerwa – but they remain subordinate to Alwain and the Luathi are forbidden to make sacrifices to them. Luathi Kahars and judges generally leave those of other cultures to their own beliefs, but they denounce Luathi who attempt to engage in cults of other kingdoms or seek to revive the worship of the storm gods the ancient peoples of the War Road worshiped. Still, these side cults and divergent or synchronistic beliefs do spring up throughout Adaanshummar. Nabal plans to seek support from the Bull Throne to forge all the temples, shrines, Kahars, and judges into a single, unified kingdom-level faith. Most Kahars tend to their shrines, altars, or temples, but the War Road does call to some – or perhaps Alwain sends his chosen out to drive back the chaos all find there.

HASHEERS

The Luathi ritualists, known as Hasheers, work in parallel with the Kahars of Alwain. Emerging within the last hundred years from Ameena Noani's Grand Scriptorium, the Hasheers founded and supported the Luathi Jackal tradition in many ways. The Luathi, as I mentioned before, seek to recover their past that was lost to them. Everyone knows the Hulathi once shepherded the Land of Risings and the Luathi lived in peace under the rule of the Grand Kingdoms, but the depth of that past and history is lost to the Luathi. The Hasheers are the Luathi's instrument for the task of recovering and understanding the history of the Zaharets. They delve not only their own texts, scriptures, and histories, but also those of Melkon, Ger, and the Trauj. Additionally, they seek out Hulathi and Hann ruins, and other darker places, in their attempt to assemble the shattered image of their past. Accompanied by Jackals and the Kahri – a group of Hasheers who apply their recovered knowledge to protect and serve the rest of the Hasheers – those of the Scriptorium seek lost knowledge for the betterment of their people. They have had remarkable success understanding the Hulathi spell-songs, lore fragments of the Grand Kingdoms, and Hannic ruins they have studied, as evidenced in many of their rites. Phamaiel even suggested Toara knew the location of the lost Hannic mansion of *Eki Ezeru*. I went to speak to her about this, as the Twice-Cursed House features prominently in the tales of Kioni, our Founding Queen, but the *Roshasheer* patiently reminded me all Hannic mansions were sealed and lost before the Grand Kingdoms fell. All of the knowledge the Hasheers glean is returned to the Grand Scriptorium of Ameena Noani, where it is cataloged, studied, and researched in massive vaults beneath the Scriptorium. Sadly, they hoard this knowledge, and I was unable to closely examine many of the vaults that hold their research and discoveries. Some say there are deeper vaults, where the Hasheers keep artifacts of great power they take from their delves, but as far as I can tell, these are merely the passings of Rumour.

One can recognise the Hasheers by their bronze-tipped staves and the scarlet cord of rank that always hangs over their right shoulders. Their staves are as much a symbol of office as a ritual implement for their rites, although in the hands of the practitioners of *Futharabdoi*, or the Journey of the Staff, they become potent weapons. One can often find Hasheers serving in other kingdoms as chroniclers and advisers, travelling to gather knowledge from foreign kingdoms, and delving the ruins of the War Road and the world with Jackals for company. While I admire their desire and tenacity, the tragic plays of hubris from my homeland would deliver well-deserved warnings to the Hasheers: to delve the secrets of those who fell is to invite others to fall in the same way.

NEW RITES

KAHAR

The Darts of Heaven

As the spears of the sun pierce the hearts and minds of those in the Zaharets, so too can the Kahar bless the ranged attacks of their allies. This rite blesses the target with heightened accuracy and range for thrown or slung weapons. This rite is immensely popular with the Omri tribe and seems to originate there.

THE DARTS OF HEAVEN			
Location to learn:	Any Temple of Alwain		
Devotion Points:	3 per target	Clash Point Cost:	3
Tradition:	Kahar (Shadow)	Range:	2 yards
Duration:	Sustained; 1-minute intervals		
Effect			
The target gains a bonus to Ranged Combat with thrown or slung weapons equal to the Kahar's Devotion. Additionally, the weapon's range is increased by a number of yards equal to the Kahar's Devotion.			
Critical success:	Increase the bonus to Ranged Combat and range by twice the Kahar's Devotion.		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None
Advancements			
Pierce the Flesh: the target also ignores 2 points of Protection. This piercing effect doubles if the Kahar invokes with a critical. *The Blessing of the Heavens:* the target's first shot also glows with the light of a torch for the duration of the rite.			

Purity of the Sun

Most Luathi rites are concerned with ritual purity. These writings and rites clearly divide actions, activities, and foods into *clean* and *unclean* categories, which daily fills the average Luathi's mind. The Kahars, as the purity keepers of those around them, dive into the roots of the commands and may draw forth the purity of those who follow Alwain to protect from disease and poison.

PURITY OF THE SUN			
Location to learn:	Any Temple of Alwain		
Devotion Points:	2 per target	Clash Point Cost:	1 per target
Tradition:	Kahar (Light)	Range:	1 yard
Duration:	10 minutes		
Effect			
When invoked, this rite allows the targets to make an immediate Endurance check against any diseases or poisons from which they are suffering. Additionally, the targets gain a bonus equal to the Kahar's Devotion to all future Endurance checks against diseases or poisons, until the end of the rite.			
Critical success:	The bonus to Endurance applies to the immediate checks, as well.		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None
Advancements			
Be Pure, as He is Pure: on a successful Endurance check, this rite reduces the potency of the disease or poison by +2. *Balm of Gilead:* if the target fails their immediate Endurance check, the target still reduces the cycle of the disease or poison by 1 step (from Instant to Immediate and so on), slowing the spread.			

To Walk Through the Valley of the Silent Lands, and Fear Not Chaos

An ancient prayer, found by those repairing the Temple of the Morning Lord west of Sentem, calls upon Alwain to strengthen the faithful's resolve in the face of those terrors from the Silent Lands. By praying through this ancient Hulathi hymn, the Kahar calls upon her faith to ward the flesh of those around her from the terrors of the dead.

TO WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SILENT LANDS, AND FEAR NOT CHAOS			
Location to learn:	Temple of the Morning Lord (Sentem)		
Devotion Points:	5	Clash Point Cost:	3
Tradition:	Kahar (Light)	Range:	5 yards
Duration:	Sustained; 2-round intervals		
Effect			
The Kahar grants Protection versus the Dead's Chill of Death. For Luathi and Trauj, this rite grants 2 Protection; for Melkoni, it grants 1 Protection; and for Gerwa, it grants 0 Protection.			
Critical success:	Increase the Protection this rite grants by +1		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None
Advancements			
Know the Lord of the Silent Lands: this rite now affects Melkoni as Luathi and Trauj, and Gerwa as Melkoni. *The Dead Must Yield:* increase the Protection this rite grants by +1 (save for Gerwa, unless the Kahar also possesses the Know the Lord of the Silent Lands advancement, in which case the Gerwa gains a total of 2).			

Voice in the Wilderness

The *Shalapher* tells the Luathi Alwain spoke creation into being. His voice raised the great dragon, Tracal, from the depths of the great sea of Yam, and the resulting words he spoke shattered the great dragon and created the world under the firmament of heaven. Those who follow Alwain can call upon his words and voice to shatter the resolve of their hardiest foes.

VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS			
Location to learn:	**Any Temple of Alwain**		
Devotion Points:	6 + 2 per group of enemie	Clash Point Cost:	All
Tradition:	Kahar (Light)	Range:	10 yards
Duration:	Instant		
Effect			
All those who oppose the Kahar must make a Defence check. Loremasters make the check for each enemy type that can hear this rite. Those that fail must make an immediate Morale roll, suffering the consequences as usual.			
Critical success:	Both tests are difficult (-25%)		
Defence:	Willpower	Save effect:	Negates the rite's effects
Advancements			
Holy Are the Words Spoken in Thy Name: the targets suffer a penalty to both checks equal to twice their Corruption. *Alwain Resists the Proud and Brings Their Deeds to Ruin:* the difficulty for both checks increases by 1 level (-25% on a success, -50% on a critical.)			

HASHEER

The Secrets Gathered

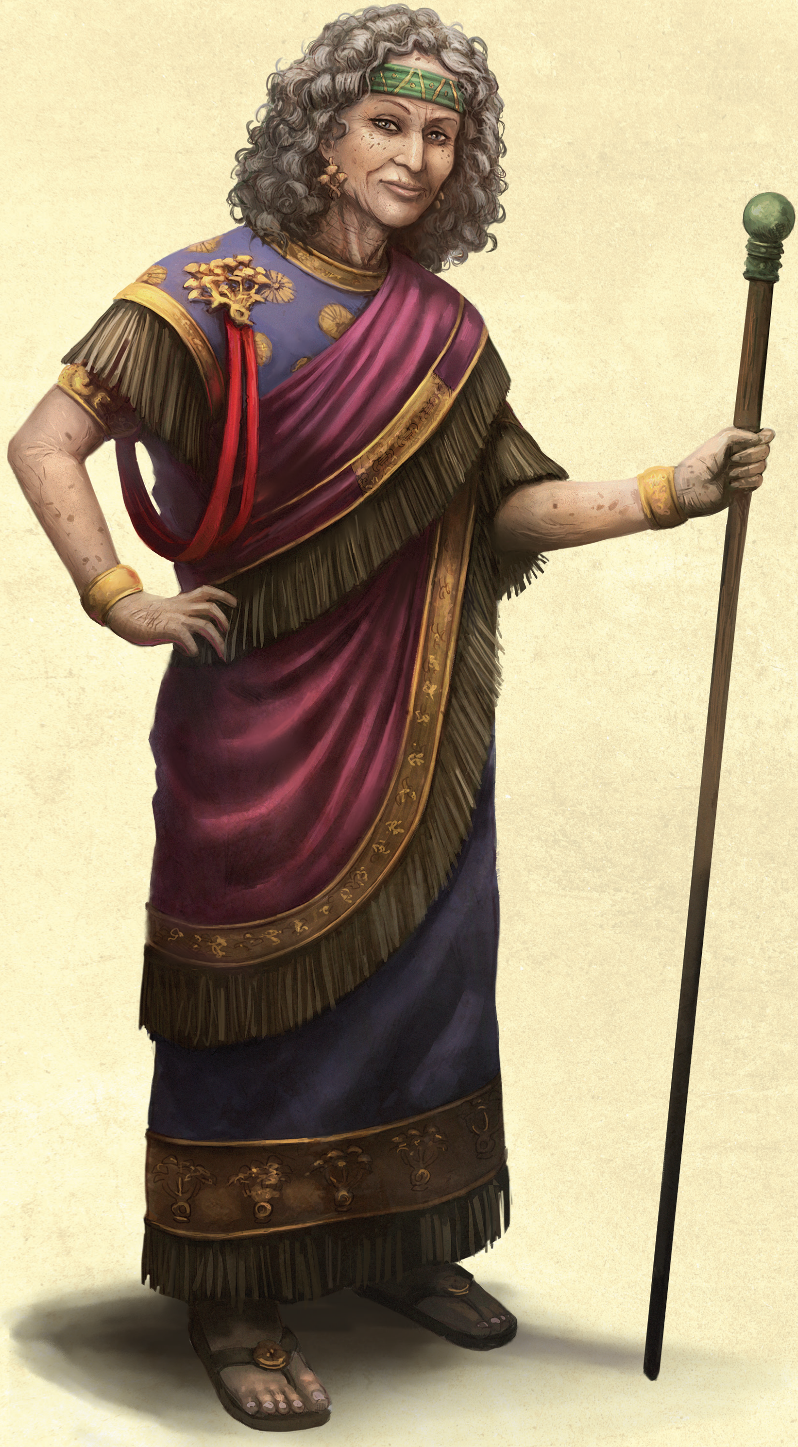
Hasheers train for years before they master the simplest of rites because their rites are based in the ancient lore of the Hulathi and their Hann allies. They tap into barely understood pacts and covenants, and the slightest misstep can cause catastrophic results. As such, the Hasheers developed ways to instantly recall forgotten lore or briefly viewed tablets.

THE SECRETS GATHERED			
Location to learn:	**The Scriptorium (Ameena Noani)**		
Devotion Points:	3 per target	Clash Point Cost:	All
Tradition:	Hasheer (Shadow)	Range:	3 yards
Duration:	Sustained; 10-minute intervals		
Effect			
The targets of this rite gain a bonus to Lore checks equal to the Hasheer's Devotion.			
Critical success:	This rite costs 0 DP		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None
Advancements			
The Lore of the Ancients: the Hasheer may attempt to invoke this rite at a hard difficulty. On a success, they apply the bonus to Ancient Lore as well. *Pacts Remembered:* the Hasheer may reduce the duration to 'Sustained; 1-minute interval' and apply this bonus to rites the targets know.			

The Fate of the Risen

The Hasheer knows those who came before were beyond their skill. The Hann and the Hulathi were beings of spirit and flesh in equal measures, and they could change the world through song, lore, and word in a way the children of humanity in the world today cannot. By invoking the ancient pacts, the Hasheer can attempt to change the world in the same way as their predecessors, at the expense of their flesh.

THE FATE OF THE RISEN			
Location to learn:	The Scriptorium (Ameena Noani)		
Devotion Points:	5 per target (may not target self)	Clash Point Cost:	All
Tradition:	Hasheer (Shadow)	Range:	3 yards
Duration:	Instant		
Effect			
The Hasheer can attempt to renew the spiritual energies of those around them. When they invoke this rite, they must select one of the following effects. For each target of the rite, the Hasheer suffers 1d4 Wounds, as their flesh cannot support the invocation in the same manner as the Hann or the Hulathi. Mettle: The targets recover 1d3 + 1 Mettle Valour: The targets recover 2d6 Valour Wounds: The targets recover 1d4 Wounds Devotion: The targets recover 2d6 DP			
Critical success:	The Hasheer suffers only 1 Wound per target		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None
Advancements			
Grace of the Heavens: the Hasheer may now select 'Fate' as an effect. When they choose this effect, the targets recover 1 Fate Point. *The Glory of the Ancients:* the Hasheer may now apply their Wisdom to the damage bonus table (see Jackals page 40). The bonus die is added to any application of this rite (save for the Fate effect). E.g., the Hasheer chooses the Mettle effect and has Wisdom 15, so they add +1d6 to the application of this rite. In this case, their targets would recover 1d3 + 1 + 1d6 Mettle.			



The Silvered Shield

The grand kingdom of Lukka was known for its inspired and indomitable legions. Those Hasheers who studied the Hulathi ruins of the northern Zaharets discovered old Hulathi words of power, which they used to stiffen the spines of their soldiers in the fields. Again, the lesser spirits of the Luathi do not possess the same puissance as the Children of Silver. This rite takes its toll on the Hasheer, but they find it is worth the cost in some cases.

THE SILVERED SHIELD			
Location to learn:	**The Scriptorium (Ameena Noani)**		
Devotion Points:	3 per target	Clash Point Cost:	3
Tradition:	Hasheer (Light)	Range:	3 yards
Duration:	Sustained; 1-minute intervals		
Effect			
The Hasheer grants each target +2 Mettle (and the associated Valour) for the duration of the rite. The Hasheer suffers 2 Wounds (which ignore Protection) for each target of this rite when invoking and sustaining it. A successful Willpower check (see below) reduces the amount of Wounds taken.			
Critical success:	The Hasheer grants +4 Mettle		
Defence:	Difficult Willpower (for the Hasheer)	Save effect:	Wounds are halved
Advancements			
A Sterner Soul: the Hasheer gains 1d6 Protection against the total number of Wounds taken each time they invoke or sustain this rite. *A Deeper Understanding:* the Hasheer grants +3 Mettle (+6 on a critical) to all targets.			

Futharabdoi (The Journey of the Staff)

All Hasheers carry the bronze-shod staff of their office. Some take it further and rely on their staff as more than a ritual implement. Taught by the Kahri (the order of Hasheers dedicated to keeping the Scriptorium physically safe), Hasheers who invoke *Futharabdoi* transform the simple tool into a potent weapon.

FUTHARABDOI (THE JOURNEY OF THE STAFF)			
Location to learn:	**The Scriptorium (Ameena Noani)**		
Devotion Points:	5	Clash Point Cost:	1
Tradition:	Hasheer (Shadow)	Range:	Self
Duration:	Sustained; 3-round interval		
Effect			
The Hasheer gains +10% to Melee Combat while using a staff and uses their Devotion to calculate their damage bonus.			
Critical success:	The bonus increases to + (the Hasheer's Devotion) % to Melee Combat.		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None
Advancements			
The Strike of the Sea: the Hasheer gains an additional +1d6 damage versus Takan, Skessh, Rathic, or targets with 10+ Corruption. *The Whirling Staff:* if wearing linen armour, the Hasheer gains +3 Protection while this rite is invoked. Otherwise, they gain +1 Protection.			

EQUIPMENT

All peoples of the Zaharets possess pride in their kingdoms and their works. The Luathi are no different; they craft items of value specifically for their unique cultural and regional needs. While one could spend a lifetime describing the minutia of the differences between the redsmiths of Melkon, the crafters of the Luathi, and the hekas of Ger, I have chosen instead to focus on those whose tales bear remembering for their roles in claiming the lands of Adaanshummar.

BADGE OF THE THIRTY/BADGE OF THE ISH BAHUR

Not for sale; must join the Thirty in Sentem or the Ish Bahur in Ameena Noani – see page 41

There are those among the Luathi tribes of the Aeco Plains who stand tall among their fellows. They raid Takan claves, ride to protect merchants, and inspire all who travel the War Road. This humble writer knows not whether these lesser-known wanderers were directly inspired by Jackals or whether the Jackals' tales caused them to emerge. What I do know is the tales of the Thirty reach far and wide in the Land of Risings. The Thirty are a group of mighty warriors typically located around Sentem, each bearing a cloak clasp in the shape of an emerald-crowned stag. Sameel ben Jepesh ben Yesim founded the Thirty in his youth; back then, they were a group of friends and bodyguards who would ride out with the second son as a retinue. It was not until Sameel became heir and then Nawsi of Sentem that the Thirty evolved into the regional guards, adventurers, and celebrities they are known as today. In the aftermath of the Unification War, the Thirty became the *Ish Bahur* (The Chosen Ones). Those who join the Thirty are known throughout the Zaharets as those who defend the War Road and the Luathi. The Takan recognise the crowned stag of Sentem and flee from the Thirty.

Effect: When a member of the Thirty or the *Ish Bahur* battles the Takan, all Takan have the negative trait *Fearful of the Thirty* applied to all Morale rolls (see Jackals page 158 for rules about negative traits).

OMRI SLING

100 ss

As I mentioned before, the Omri tribe is known for their unique warfare style, which utilises an abundance of left-handed slingers. Able to sling a stone the size of a man's fist over 50 yards with divine accuracy – not even divine Aegletes' priestesses can strike with such accuracy – the Omri do not share the secrets of their slings. I have heard tales that include ancient rites, strange materials such as human or Takan leather, resins from the forest of Linga Hualla, and oils from the ancient sites of the *Tjekker*.

Effect: An Omri sling functions like a regular sling (see page 52 in *Jackals*). However, on a critical, the slinger also imposes a penalty equal to their Strength to all the target's actions for 1d6 rounds.

ACACIA SPEAR

240 ss

I have seen the defenders of Ameena Noani practice with their two-handed spears. Many wield spears treated by their Hasheers – weapons of acacia wood, hardened by the Hasheers' rites and imbued with thirst for the blood of their ancient foes. Despite my best efforts, none of the Hasheers will discuss how these spears are crafted. I keep at it, knowing such weapons could turn the tide for Escanoi.

Effect: An acacia spear cannot be sundered during combat, instead requiring a deliberate attempt to break the shaft of the spear (a hard Athletics check). Additionally, thanks to the tireless work of the Hasheers, these spears inflict +3 damage to Takan.

WARHORN OF AMEENA NOANI

Not for sale; must acquire a patron located in Ameena Noani and achieve patron level 3 with them

I awake each day to the sounds of the horns blowing in the outer court of the Temple of Alwain. By Araton's bolts, these Luathi love their deep, rumbling horns that bray loudly throughout the city. I believe I would prefer the braying of animals to these horns, which rouse one to wakefulness as the day breaks. I have heard that, during the war, many Luathi of this grand city used their horns not to rally the faithful, but to rally warriors and instill fear in their foes during the battles at Tjaru and Mayrah Vedil. The Hasheers of Ameena Noani have begun to produce smaller versions of these horns for the Nawsi and Jackals in service of the city and the kingdom.

Effect: Once per day, a Jackal may sound this horn in combat for 2 CP. All Takan and evil humanoids (10+ Corruption) must make an immediate Morale roll. The Jackal and all allies within earshot recover Valour equal to half their own Courage.

FATE TALENT

Relationship, Not Rites

The Luathi know all rites flow from their relationship with Alwain and his Divine Council. When taking this talent, the Luathi gains the ability to restore all spent DP by spending a Fate Point and offering an act to Alwain. This takes the form of an oath – to either refrain from an act, take an act, or offer a sacrifice. For example, not eating until the Takan the pack chases are slain, drawing the blood of the Daughter Beneath the Earth by sunrise, or offering 5 bulls on the next Udalwan. The Loremaster adjudicates the nature of the quid pro quo. If the Jackal fails to complete their oath, they gain 1d10 Corruption and lose access to their DP for 1 season.

TRIBAL VIRTUES

A player may choose any of these Tribal Virtues in lieu of the Cultural Virtues *Fires of Freedom*, *Bonds of Family,* or *Seeker of Knowledge* when playing a Luathi from one of the following tribes.

AMAR (JUDGE OF THE LAND)

The Amar (page 26) are the judges and rulers of the northern lands. Sars of Ameena Noani are held in high honour by those in the northern cities of Rataro, Mikro, and the Orsems. As a member of this tribe, Amar Jackals can call upon this Virtue when dealing with the sea, in matters of law, or when acting as a judge, ruler, or commander over a group of people.

HIMEEL (GUARDIAN AND POET)

The Himeel (page 26) are pastoral herders who spend much of their lives tending to their flocks in the plains south of Ameena Noani. Himeel Jackals can call upon this Virtue to fight off wild animals and Takan, protect their livelihood, aid others in matters of cattle or herds, or compose or perform poetry and song.

RESH (LION OF THE PLAINS)

The Resh (page 27) are the largest of all Luathi tribes. Their connection to the throne and Sentem have bolstered their pride. Resh Jackals can call upon this Virtue when they are in a position of strength or power, or when they call upon their relationship to the throne.

OMRI (FALLEN, BUT NOT GONE)

The Omri (page 27) are the smallest of all the tribes that remained in in the Zaharets. Despite the persecution and culling of their people, they survive thanks to their tenacity and the skill of their slingers – a direct response to being forced into the wilds of the War Road. Omri Jackals can call upon this Virtue when they are the underdog, pressured into disadvantageous positions, or fighting for survival.

SEASONAL ACTIONS

THE OATH OF REFUGE

If a Luathi Jackal accidentally slays a fellow Luathi, they may use their seasonal action to take the Oath of Refuge. This action must take place before a Kahar and an altar of Alwain. A sacrifice of 250 ss is part of the requirement of this action. The Jackal in question reduces any Corruption gained from the murder to 0, gains the Oath of Refuge Ability (see below) and must take to the War Road for three years. So long as they remain outside Luathi-held cities, any kin of the slain will incur 8 Corruption for slaying the Jackal. However, should the Jackal enter a Luathi settlement, the kin of the slain will incur 0 Corruption for slaying the Jackal. This Oath lasts until the end of the same season three years after taking the Oath.

Oath of Refuge Ability: During the three years this Jackal is under the Oath of Refuge, if they spend a Fate Point to prevent their death, their Oath provides them additional strength. Instead of remaining alive with 1 Wound, the Fate Point restores 1d6 + 1 Wounds (but never more than a single row) and the Jackal immediately refreshes their CP. However, while under this Oath, the Jackal never gains a Fate Point from the mutual critical rule (see *Jackals* page 66) and loses access to this ability while inside the walls of a Luathi settlement.

THE PLEDGE OF THE ISH BAHUR

If a Luathi Jackal has an Exalted patron status with the Malekh of Adaanshummar (see page 137) – which may occur automatically at the end of *Fall*, if the Jackal possessed patronage with Sameel or Phamea – they may take the *Pledge of the Ish Bahur* as a seasonal action. This action requires the Jackal to present themselves before the Bull Throne, declare loyalty to the throne and the one who sits upon it, and take the Pledge of the mighty ones. Upon doing so, they immediately gain a Badge of the *Ish Bahur* (see page 38) and the *Pledge of the Ish Bahur Ability* (see below). If they ever betray the throne, the kingdom, or the Malekh, they lose this ability and gain 5 Corruption. The Badge continues to function until it is taken from the fallen Jackal.

Pledge of the Ish Bahur Ability: The Jackal may use a Fate Point to recover Valour equal to their Courage.

After my time with the Luathi, I boarded a ship from my homeland and took to the wine dark sea. The prevailing winds carried us down along the coast of the War Road, before heading out into the Futhetia Sea. The captain – who was also from Escanoi, praise Araton – promised smooth sailing into the harbors of Ger. There my new patron, Neferu of Ger, awaited my arrival.

CHAPTER 3

BOOK 2 – OF THE GERWA AND THE LANDS OF THE SOUTH

And she, the goddess of the great river, shall inhabit this statue and possess it. Therein shall dwell Kephut, the lady of waters, first and greatest daughter of the Father of Waters, chieftainess of Ger's fertility and might. Hail, Kephut! The Father of Water opens your mouth and your eyes with the implements of the hemet-netjer and the hem-netjer, by which the gods of the south have always awakened. All the Eight bring words of wisdom and might to their people, to their children – the sons and daughters of Kiani. Recite these words to us, your faithful servants.

~Passage from the dedication of the Temple of Kephut
and the installation of the statue image~

As the boat drew near the shore, the city of the Kiani of Kephhi stood before us. My ancestors tell tales of the might and darkness of the South, yet as the grand city of Kephut on the waters of the great river of the goddess appeared on the southern horizon, the glory of the Gerwa spread before me. The grand pyramid of the Lady of Waters rose tall in the center of the city – the temple of the Kiani of Kephhi beside it – seen by all who ply the wine-dark seas. Of all the people in the circle of the world, only the Gerwa rival the Melkoni in works, deeds, and culture. Thus, I arrived in Ger and began my studies.

~Akraiatos of Escanoi, *Travellers on the War Road, Book 2 -*
Of the Gerwa and the Lands of the South~

THE GERWA – THE SERVANTS OF THE LIVING GOD-KINGS

It has been several seasons since I arrived in Kephhi, and I am beginning to feel almost Melkoni again. The wine, hospitality, and culture of the Kiani courts are seconded only by my beloved Escanoi. And so, as the breeze from the Futhetia drives away the heat and dust of the day, I put the Muse's words to the papyrus and begin this chronicle of the Gerwa people, their great cities, and their god-kings, in the month of Erbe during what the Gerwa refer to as the 5,473rd year of the Kiani. Once again, I find myself at a window, overlooking a city by the sea, although the Gerwa word for the sea translates as the 'green fields'. According to the temple records at the great temple of Kephut, this city has stood, and Ger has thrived, for thousands of years. Despite coups both heretical and foreign, Ger remains much as it did in the time of the Grand Kingdoms. Their kingdom, huddled around the river Kephut, claims records and king-lists that extend farther back than even blessed Melkon's. Bounded on the west and east by the Ungathi Desert and Johamma's Gap, in the north by the Futhetia sea, and in the south by the Dwanib Ankat mountains, the kingdom of Ger thrives. From the eight cities of their gods, the Gerwa contemplate and propitiate their gods and make war on the Ungathi tribes of the west. While they are one kingdom and people, the cities of Ger are a nest of vipers shining in the sun – beautiful but deadly to the unwary, foolish, and arrogant. The typical Gerwa looks down on those from other cultures. How could they not? According to the scribes of blessed Melkon, the Gerwa were the first to develop astronomy, religion, mathematics, and writing. I can hear the pride in Neferu's voice as she speaks about the history of the Kiani and the Gerwa, as she shows me the broad city streets lined with palm and date trees, and as we walk the courts of the Kiani and the pyramid temples of the Eight. How could anyone live in Ger and not think it paradise in a world of wilderness? Truly, Ger is one of the great kingdoms in the arc of the world. I must say, after a decade of war, even blessed Melkon does not compete with the pervasive beauty of Ger and her cities.

Each of the eight preeminent cities are ruled by one of the Kiani – divine queens and kings who trace their blood to one of the Eight and rule creation in their stead. The Kiani are divine and rule their cities with a level of authority the *anaxi* of Melkon would envy. Still, all are subordinate to the Kiani of Kianhi – the city of Aahote, the chief of the gods of Ger. This 'head' Kiani acts as the embodiment of the god of gods for the Ger, keeping the peace and leading the war against the Ungathi tribes, much as the *anaxi* do in Melkon. Ger's history is that of its god-kings. The first of the god-kings – and first semi-divine son of Aahote – was Mim. He ordered Ger, dividing the people into castes, and laid down the foundations of the grand cities and their temples. Ramphisiteru, his daughter, succeeded her father as the second semi-divine Kiani of Ger. It was Ramphisiteru who walked into Anu's courts and retrieved the headdress of the Sun, the golden crown of the Kiani of Kianhi – proof that the divine line of Aahote would continue to guide and illuminate Ger. According to the stories of this time, it was also Ramphisiteru who first came into conflict with the Ungathi tribes to the west. It was her descendant, Hamisaru, the nineteenth Kiani of Kianhi, who brought the first victory over the tribes and established the western fortresses, the greatest of which – Bunen – still stands watch over Ger's western border.

GERWAN CASTES

When attempting to understand the Gerwa, one must first understand the structure of their society. The Gerwa believe Aahote established the cosmos and the cosmological order that upholds creation. Part of the structure that undergirds the world is the caste system, established in Ger by Aahote's son, Mim, the first of the mortal Kiani. There is no typical day for the Gerwa people; their days vary by their castes. The castes of the Gerwa typically stand inviolate – one may not leave one's birth caste, save for four notable exceptions. First, a Kiani may raise – or cast down – any Gerwa to whichever caste they wish. Typically, this happens during times of war, where a conscript is given a place among the warrior caste; however, it may also happen as a reward or punishment for faithful or disloyal acts. Second, a Gerwa may change their caste through marriage. When marrying, the Gerwa children belong to whichever of their parents' castes is higher. Third, a Gerwa may be adopted into the priest caste, which I explain further below. And the fourth and final way for a Gerwa to change their caste status is to abandon it all together, as the hekas do.

Though many in the Zaharets believe there are eight Gerwan castes, Neferu told me the grand priests acknowledge ten different castes. I endeavour to relate and explain these to the best of my understanding. Much like the Gerwan pyramid temples, the number of members in each caste order grows as one descends the hierarchy, and each level of the caste system contains a trio of groupings.

THE DIVINE LEVEL

A term of my own devising – Neferu frowned when I mentioned it to her – this tier is equivalent to the top of the pyramid. As the building is an imitation of a mountain, with the gods resting at the pinnacle, so the castes at this level participate in the divine. Either by nature or in service, these three are the closest to the Eight in the eyes of the Gerwa.

Kiani

The Kiani of the Eight, the divine rulers of the eight cities of the Ger, occupy either the bottom rung of the celestial order or the top rung of the terrestrial order. This caste does not extend to the families of the Kiani, as it would in blessed Melkon, rather only to the dead Kiani, the current Kiani, and the heir apparent. This caste's rights and duties are special, according to Neferu, as it is both a social and religious position. Yes, the Kiani bear a resemblance to the *anaxi* of blessed Melkon; however, their role is also intermixed with that of a high priest of Araton or Ryla, as they act as the gods' image in the world. In addition to ruling and leading Ger to war, they preside over temple investitures, religious festivals, and – after death – judgment of Gerwa souls in Anu's Court.

Priest

Much like the Luathi, the role of the Hemet-netjer and the Hem-netjer are both hereditary and open to whomever the Eight deem blessed. Many children abandoned on the streets of Gerwan cities are taken in by those who serve in the temples. Most are servants in the temple, but a rare few do secure their futures by attaining positions of priesthood. Neferu was circumspect about the existence of a priesthood dedicated to the Six, but this chronicler knows such cthonic cults exist in blessed Melkon, where the Six are less ritualised than in Ger. To assume the Six have no adherents, temples, or worshipers here is blind folly.

Warrior

Further down the hierarchy than the priests, but in service to the same temples, are those in the warrior caste. The Gerwa have a standing fighting force, composed of these heredity warriors; the priesthood organises them to fight on behalf of the Kiani and the god of their city. Each division is named after the god whose temple supports them by providing training, barracks, and material needs – the Bebis division and the Aahote division are but two examples. This knowledge brings a strange tale to light. It is said the divisions stationed on the western edge of the kingdom, engaged in fighting the Ungathi from the border fortresses, all bear names of the Six. Who supports them and from where does their funding come? Neferu refused to elaborate, but her small smile lent credence to my theory of underground temples to the Six.

THE EARTHLY LEVEL

Continuing with my pyramid analogy, the middle of the pyramid consists of those who support the divine level by providing sustenance for mortals and gods alike. They tend to both beasts and plants in the fields, as well as to the 'garden of the gods,' as the sacred scrolls of the Eight refer to Ger. If the first tier mediates between the heavens and the earth, this tier governs and tends to the earth itself. In times of war, they act much as the *psiloi* of blessed Melkon would.

Cow Herder

Herds of cows fill the plains between the cities of Ger. Those who herd these cows are sacred to both Bebis and Amendiris; there are many tales in which the mother of the Eight and the Herdmaster appear to virtuous herders to grant them blessings, children, or other rewards for their service. This caste spends most of the year out in the fields, tending the massive herds the Kiani own and fighting off bandits, wild animals, and raiders from other cities. Some few are blessed by a divine sign or mark and make their way into the service of one in the divine tier; they may see themselves rise to the ranks of the warrior caste.

Swine Herder

The delineation between those who herd cows and those who tend to all other animals seems arbitrary to me, but I am assured the difference is readily apparent to the average Gerwa. Those above and below the earthly level consider those who tend to the non-cow flocks to be vital members of this tier – as far as this chronicler observed – but those within this tier view them with contempt. Perhaps this is because cows are the chosen animal of Amendiris and Bebis and farming is considered sacred to Kephut, but the remainder of the herd animals – such as swine – are considered 'lesser' beasts, good only for trade and for consumption by those in the lower castes.

Farmer

Much like in blessed Melkon, the farmers are the solid foundation of Gerwan culture. In Ger, they tend to grow barley, sorghum, and emmer. The Kephut floods every year during the months of Samane, Tise, and Eser, which keeps the black soil of the Kephut plains the most fertile in the circle of the world. It is said the farmers of Ger must merely scatter seeds on the surface of the ground, and Kephut causes them to rise and ripen for harvest. I can say the few farmers I spoke to while I observed them toiling in the plains speak of Kephut's blessing as a sure sign they are the most fortunate among all the peoples of the world.

THE WATERS LEVEL

The bottom of the pyramid consists of those who barely rise from the chaotic sea of the rest of the world, as the Gerwa see it. These are the Gerwa who organise, transport, or trade the bounty of Ger, serving all those in the tiers above them abroad in the world. They take the knowledge, goods, and people of Ger and send them abroad, only to bring the wealth of the world back to their Kiani. It should be noted that one can find members from all castes in the courts of the Kiani. The Kiani rely on these caste members for information and insight concerning the affairs of the kingdom and its interests.

Tradesmen

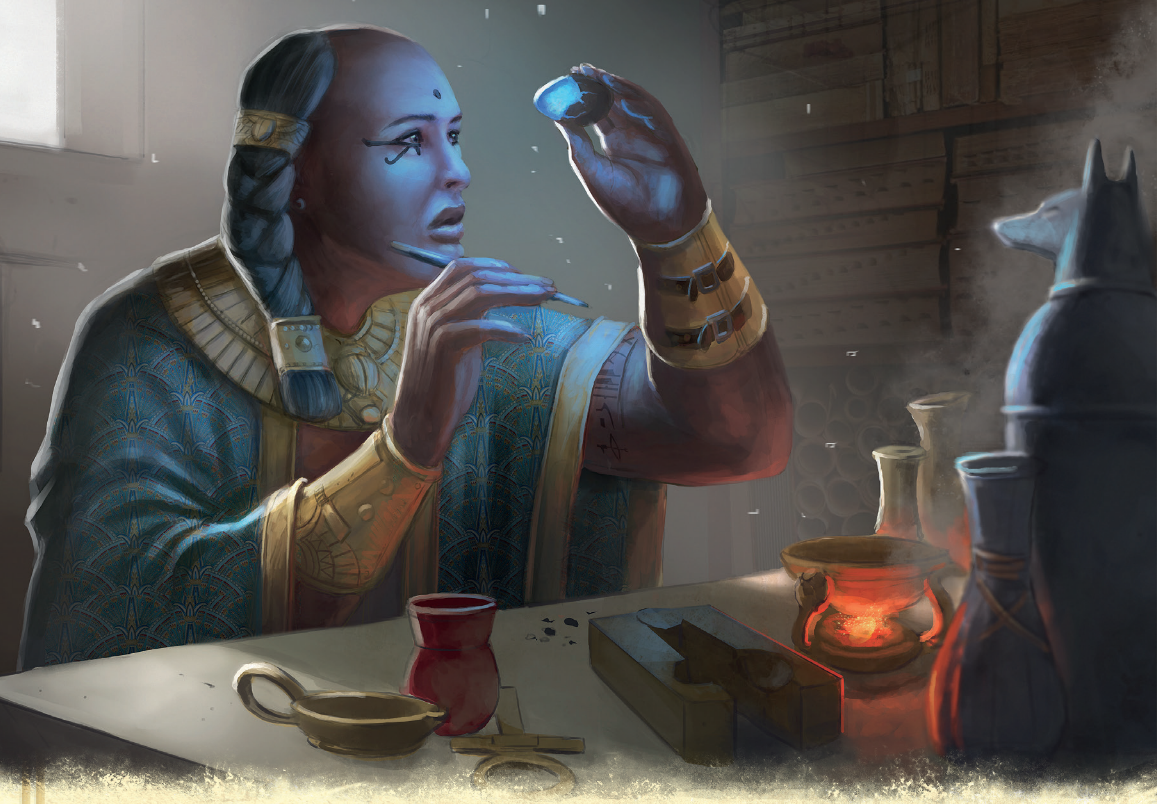
Most Gerwa view the acts of purchasing from and selling to outsiders as a necessary evil. Concern over the base matters of shekels, talents, and materials is seen as irreligious at best and damning at worst by the typical Gerwa. However, since it is necessary, the Eight provided for the Gerwa. Those in the waters of society who are tasked with these dealings are said to find redemption and salvation in performing these tasks; they will be rewarded in Anu's Courts in the same way as a righteous Kiani or a mighty warrior.

Scribe

One idiosyncrasy of the Gerwa culture that does not sit well with this chronicler is their relegation of scribes and sailors to the lowest social strata, with the tradesmen and carters. Indeed, the Gerwa seem barbaric when compared to Melkoni, who have a high regard for both scribes and sailors. Neferu pointed out that not all scribal activities are relegated to the bottom caste, only those not connected to the castes above them. The Divine castes take care of scribing Kiani missives and priestly texts and pronouncements. Essentially, it is the matters of the material and exterior world that are given to the scribes in this caste. This humble and indignant chronicler feels much kinship for these scribes; perhaps when I return to blessed Melkon, I can find a place for these scribes.

Sailor/Carter

Much like the tradesmen, those who ply their trade by transporting materials – whether in Ger, along the War Road, or on the great green sea as they call the depths of the Futhetia – are part of Gerwan society's bottom tier. The dismissal of and revulsion for these Gerwa seems rooted in the fact that the place the Eight carved out for this caste is beyond the borders of the cities of the Kiani and Ger. Many of the Gerwa with whom the Luathi and the Trauj have dealings are either part of this caste or belong to the Hekas.



HEKAS: THOSE OUTSIDE THE ORDER

No matter their caste of origin, once a Gerwa learns the preliminary rites of the Hekas, they are cut off from the assembly of their people. Some sort of metaphysical change occurs – obtuse to this Melkoni, but real to Neferu – which severs the ba of the Hekas from the courts of Anu and the Aahotian order. Neferu was tight-lipped about why anyone would want to do such a thing, or what might await such heretics in the courts of their gods. Still, for all the distaste the Gerwa have for the Hekas, these outsiders fill a vital role in their society. The Hekas brew potions for health, perform cleansing rites on houses and profane sites, and even advise the Kiani – though all this is done in secret, of course. All Gerwa know where the Hekas keep their shops; they visit the Hekas in secret and appreciate a discreet Hekas as much as a proficient one.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A GERWA

The variety of daily activities and rituals for the Gerwa vary greatly between castes. A herder wakes up before dawn and starts their day with barley or corn meal baked over a dung fire before heading out for a day of labour in the fields, while the Kiani greets the dawn attended by servants, with a meal of bread, beer, and fruits. Though the rituals change, they are quite similar at their core – they acknowledge and reinforce one's place in Aahote's order. Prayers of thanks to Aahote mark the early hours for all the castes. At night, prayers to Amendiris for shelter from the coming darkness are common among the castes in the earth and water levels.

HOLY FESTIVALS

THE AKEHT AAHOTAN

The 1st Udada – the 2nd Udada of Sedis

This holy day is celebrated throughout Ger, as it marks the traditional start of the Kehput plains' annual flooding period. Monsoons along the Gulf of Henaia's coast to the south cause the Kehput river to swell and overflow its banks all the way to the Futhetia, depositing a thick layer of rich, black silt throughout the plains. This time of planting and renewal is marked by a festival throughout Ger, save for those in the border forts that stand watch over the western and southern borders. While Kehput is the focus of the ritual sacrifices of incense and grain cakes, as well as the shared meals, there are also special rituals to Aahote on Udafuth, Udaqara, and Udsar. These rites mark his enthronement in the heavens after the Six went to rest, his death and dismemberment at the hands of his brother, and his rebirth and establishment of the castes, respectively.

THE HEV OF FIRST NIGHTS

Zadon's week/Tasfoseba

Throughout the arc of the world, most endure this inauspicious week as a time of dark spirits, ill-omens, and evil; However, for the Gerwa, it is a solemn and introspective time, during which they remember the passing of the old world and the death of the Six. Though they invoke these gods in a punitive fashion throughout the rest of the year, during this week, the Gerwa speak about and sacrifice openly to the Six. It is also a time to remember dead ancestors and loved ones, as well as prepare for the new year by cleansing the previous one of evil.

THE HEV OF LAMPS/THE GRAND EXORCISM

3rd Udameena of Hamis

This festival acts as a kingdom-wide purification rite. At sunset on this day, the Gerwan light lamps all throughout Ger and keep them burning throughout the night. These lamps are simple clay dishes filled with oil, salt, incense, and a floating wick. They shed light and emit a sweet aroma that fills the whole of the Gerwan cities. The poorest among them light a single lamp, but the majority keep their entire houses and courtyards lit. The Kiani palaces and temples of the Eight are beacons for the whole city during this time. From what I have gathered, this is an exorcism, as the light and scent from the lamps drive spirits away from Gerwan homes, streets, and cities. Even Hekas and Gerwan Jackals celebrate this festival wherever they are, to cleanse the world for a new year.

THE HEV OF THE EIGHT

Various Dates

Throughout the year, there are standing festivals in honour of each of the Eight. The Gerwa celebrate throughout the kingdom, but the grand festival is held in the city that bears the god or goddess's name. These are days of celebration, feasting, rest, and meals shared with the priests of the Eight. One would assume there are similar festivals in honour of the Six, but Neferu insisted this is not the case. Only during the *Week of First Nights* do the Gerwa openly sacrifice to the Six. The festivals of the Eight are described below, save for Aahote's, which I covered previously.

Amendiris

1st Udsar – 1st Udgai of Tise

These days are set apart to celebrate Amendiris, the mother of all Gerwa. During this celebration, the Gerwa shave all their hair, which they then burn over dung fires. The origin of this rite is obscure, but the practical effect is it prevents the lice that spawn at the start of the rainy season from finding purchase on the Gerwa. The first and third days of the festival are marked by joy and celebration, but the second day is somber. They fast as they mourn with Amendiris those who have passed to Anu's court and for Aahote, who was slain and dismembered. The Gerwa put on sackcloth, cover themselves with ashes, and wail in their homes and in the streets. But their mourning turns to joy at dawn on the third day of the festival. This third day is marked by gift-giving, the sacrifice of two hippopotamuses at the great temple of Amendiris, and a time of celebration to the mother of all. This is the only time the Gerwa ever sacrifice these sacred animals.

Henutmehut

2nd Udkauma – 2nd Udaketa of Erbe

These days are set apart to celebrate Henutmehut – the warrior-goddess who watches over Ger – and the warrior caste that acts as her presence in the fields of war. During this celebration, all Gerwa arm themselves with blunt wooden spears and wicker shields. Some organise games and competitions, while others reenact one of the great battles of Ger history. In Henuthi, the hemet-netjer and the hem-netjer of Henutmehut lead a procession of warriors, priests, and sacred hippopotamuses through the western and eastern gates of the city, which symbolises Henutmehut leaving Ger to wage war on her enemies.

Bebis

3rd Udgai –3rd Udameena of Salas

These days are set apart to celebrate Bebis – the god of the herds – and the herder castes that act as his presence among the Gerwan herds. During this celebration, the Gerwa neither sacrifice nor consume meat as they celebrate the birth of the new foals in the Gerwan herds. Grain cakes, oil, and wine are the primary sacrifices and meals consist of fruits, vegetables, and breads. The Gerwa seek Bebis' blessing for the next year by setting aside death during the birth of the herds.

Djhutemos

1st Udoura –1st Udaketa of Samane

These days are set apart to celebrate Djhutemos – the god who records all the deeds of Ger and the Gerwan peoples – and for the scribal caste that acts as his eyes and hands throughout the arc of the world. During this celebration, the Gerwa craft or purchase a clay vase. The poorer Gerwa purchase or make what they can, while the rich purchase beautiful vases, enameled with ritual scenes from Gerwan history. Over the course of the feasting and the celebrations, which is marked by ingesting large quantities of beer, friends and family whisper secrets, failings, and other secret knowledge into the sacred vases, unburdening their souls. At dawn on Udaketa, the Gerwa awake and dash their vases to the ground, sending their secrets to Djhutemos and freeing their spirits for the next year. It is considered an ill omen for someone's sacred vase to remain intact – most take this to mean someone lied or failed to expose some grave knowledge – so they throw their vase from the highest point they can reach. From dawn until noon, one can hear clay shattering and great cheers rising throughout the cities of Ger.

Kaapher

2nd Udgai – 2nd Udameena of Eser

These days are set apart to celebrate Kaapher – the goddess who blesses trade and watches over Gerwan dealings – and for the waters castes that act as her presence in the arc of the world. During this celebration, the Gerwa purchase a kaaphera: a token bearing the image of Kaapher. The Kiani carry a golden kaaphera with them, most Gerwa purchase one made of silver, while the poorest among them carry painted wooden kaapheras. During the three days, the Gerwa engage in trickery, dissembling, and other unsavory activities to trade, steal, or purchase as many kaaphera as they can. Losing a kaaphera is considered an ill omen for the following year, while trading up – say from wood to silver, or from silver to gold – is considered a blessing from Kaapher. During the high feast at the end of the festival, the Gerwa send the blessing of Kaapher out into the world by throwing the kaaphera into the river, the sea, or other major body of water for the Gerwa to find and recover for the rest of the year.

Kephut

1st Udafuth –2nd Udaqara of Sina

These days are set apart to celebrate Kephut – the goddess of the great river that flows throughout Ger and provides its fecundity – and for the farmer castes that act as her presence in the fields of Ger. During this celebration, the Gerwa participate in the pressing of kikri, a thick reed that grows on the edges of the Kephut. Some cut it down, some bundle it, but the majority of the Gerwa participate by pressing the cut and soaked reeds beneath their feet in great vats. This produces a thick, heady oil the Gerwa burn for light and fuel, and with which they season their food. The Gerwa celebrate this festival with extreme libation as they consume their thick, dark beer, which is enhanced during this festival with the seeds of the *kikri* to produce a beer more potent than any wine from blessed Melkon. Many Gerwa prophesy while under the effects of the *kikri* beer, and scribes write down the prophesies of the divine caste to study and interpret during the next year.

Anu

3rd Udaketa – 3rd Udaqara of Erbe

These days are set apart to celebrate Anu – the judge and god of the dead, who takes all souls to himself upon death. Though Anu's adepts are not celebrated during this festival, the rash settling of old debts with violence rises. During this celebration, the Gerwa seal the windows and the doors their homes so no one can see what is going on from the outside. They decorate the insides of their homes with bright colors and lights and spend their days praying to Anu to keep the *ukuku* – horned owls said to carry the spirits of the righteous to Anu and the damned to the Reed sea – away from house, home, and loved ones. The Gerwa emerge from their homes on the last day of the festival, banging pots, yelling, and making much noise to chase away the ukuku, the adepts, and Anu's vision. They show the god of death they are alive and vital, daring Anu to travel abroad for another year.

GERWAN JACKALS

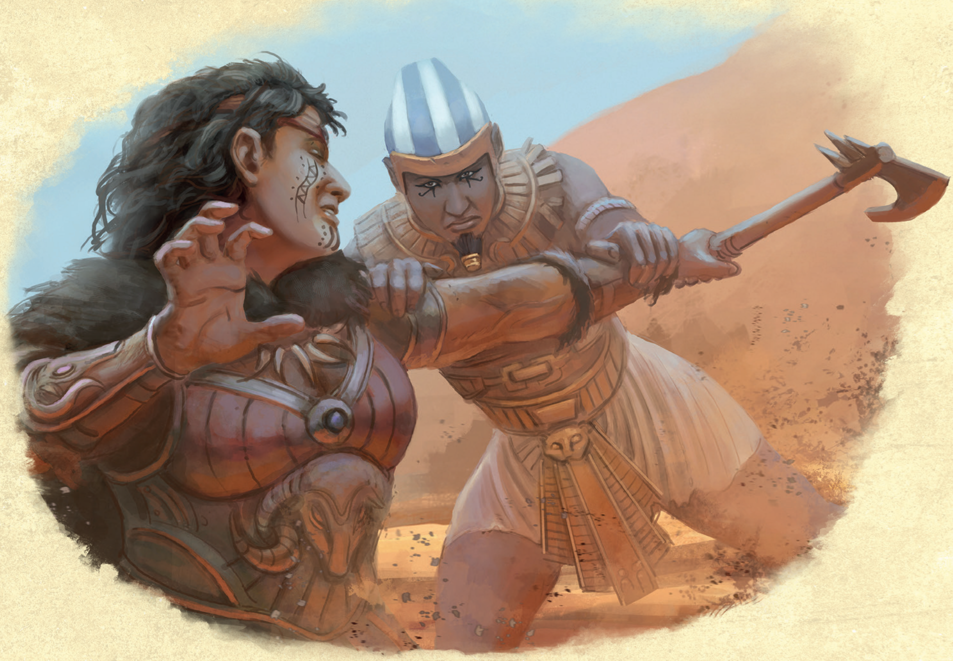
I can understand why the Gerwa may decide they want to leave this life and turn to the open road. Their gods circumscribe the arc of their lives, almost restraining them. While the Gerwa enjoy the blessings of their deities, they must do so within the narrow circumference of their lot. Is it any surprise many would chafe and buck and turn to the War Road in their wish for more freedom? Much like the Luathi, passion is not what drives a Gerwa to step away from what they know and travel the wilds in Jackal packs. No, there are two main reasons a Gerwa would accept the wandering and suffering freedom offers, instead of living in peace and plenty in the kingdom of Ger: a calloused spirit that feels called to be an outsider, or a sending by one in authority.

CALLOUSES OF THE SPIRIT/CALL OF THE OUTSIDER

Much as laborers in the fields find their hands toughened by their work, many in Ger feel a toughening of their spirit as they labour under their caste's strictures. Instead of the 'comforting knowledge' of place – as Neferu refers to it – these Gerwa desire not something more, but something *different* for their lives. Many ignore this longing; they know that becoming a Hekas, Jackal, or outsider means they will be removed from the blessings of Aahote or Anu. But for others, this longing cannot be ignored. When one adds to this longing the stories of those who won glory and acclaim and were welcomed into the divine caste, one can understand why Gerwan Jackals arise. One such story is that of the *Trials of Iminotep*. Iminotep was a farmer among the fields of Bebishi, a pious man by all accounts. When his family was taken by the reed plague, Iminotep cursed the gods, left Ger as an outcast, and became a Jackal. For many years, those along the War Road feared Iminotep, as he often strayed between Jackal and Wolf. However, when he received word of the Ungathi tribes invading western Ger and threatening Bebishi, Iminotep gathered several packs and rode for Ger. The poem *The Return and Release of Iminotep* chronicles the battle against the tribes of the west. Iminotep defeated the Ungathi tribes and broke the siege of Bebishi. The Kiani of Bebishi gave Iminotep the opportunity to join the ranks of the warrior caste in Anu's court, but only if he made amends for his blasphemy. The poem ends with Iminotep the warrior being drawn and quartered by four cows; his soul sped to Anu's court, carried by eight ukuku. A strange tale, yes, but one that highlights the Gerwan desire to find new paths in the service of their gods.

A SENDING

Not all Gerwa who wander the War Road do so without intent or the blessing of the Eight. The Kiani of Ger know it is beneficial to have Gerwa in the courts and towns along the War Road. Jackals are allowed to go places Gerwa traders are not. Under the mantle of the Jackal, Ger sends out recruiters (the wars with Ungathi require a constant supply of warriors), messengers, traders, merchants, and of course, spies. Many Gerwan Jackals take to the War Road with missions from their Kiani or the hem-netjer and hemet-netjer. Others are hem-netjer and hemet-netjer themselves, who travel the world at the behest of their gods, much like the Luathi and Melkoni do. Many of them return to Ger when their missions are over, but others fall in love with the life of the Jackal – and the freedom it offers – and stray into the role of the outsider. They try to hide this from their masters, but Neferu assures me Djhutemos and Anu know the final tally.



GERWAN HISTORY

As I mentioned before, Ger's history extends into the distant recesses of the past. While blessed Melkon does trade with Ger, our own stories do not extend as far back as those of the Gerwa. Melkoni believe Ger is the cradle of civilisation: everything we know of the world sprung from the earliest Gerwa cities. Their records of their history begin thousands of years ago – 5,473 years ago, according to Neferu. However, as I examined scrolls and listened to stories, it was not clear how accurate that number is. The first age of Ger – the Age of the Six – is said to be 4000 years long, and each of the first eight Kiani were said to have ruled for 200 years or more. Alas, Neferu would not permit me the time needed to determine the veracity of these scrolls, so I shall relate the tales as they were told to me. The history of Ger, as it exists today, begins with the end of the strange war of the gods and the founding of the eight cities of Ger.

THE CITY-STATES OF THE GODS

Ger began when the Eight won the battle against chaos and the usurpers from the west, and established Ger as a garden in the wilderness. Strangely, the terrors that plagued early Melkoni and Luathi history, namely the presence of the Takan, seem to be wholly absent from Gerwa tales. Mim, following in Aahote's example, founded one city for each of the Eight, which the Gerwa built around the pyramid-temples to each god: Kianhi (Aahote), Amendehi (Amenderis), Narnhi (Henutmehut), Reynhi (Bebis), Nwynhi (Djhutemos), Yalonhi (Kaapher), Gernhi (Kephut), and Anuhi (Anu). The Kiani were not unified during these early days. Instead, according to the scrolls I examined, it was terribly similar to the current state of blessed Melkon – a group of city-states bound together by common faith and culture, but still willing to war against each other. This continued for centuries, with the Kiani of Kianhi acting as judge and adjudicator as often as aggressor in these conflicts. Some Kiani in one city or another held rule over all of Ger for a generation or two, but they inevitably returned to their independent states. This continued until the first Ungathi tribes attacked western Ger.

WARS WITH THE UNGATHI

The Gerwa have warred with the Ungathi for as long they have dwelt near the Kephut,. The outside world knows little about the Ungathi, for which Neferu says the kingdoms under the arc of the world owe Ger a great debt. The tribes of the western desert have long raided the western edge of the kingdom. Though the Gerwa speak of them as though they were an inhuman plague, the images on the walls of Ungathi temples paint a different picture. Warriors of great skill and stamina, hardened by the desert plains west of Kiani's reach, they are depicted as having the heads of animals – primarily the lion, the wolf, the hippo, and the jackal. However, the scribes I spoke to say these are masks worn to inspire fear in the hearts of the Gerwa, which seems to be effective. Hamisaru, whose story I shared previously, defeated the Ungathi tribes for the first time, and united Ger under the Kiani of Kianhi's rulership. Thus, ensuring the kingdom's safety and defence became the Kiani of Kianhi's chief role.

INVASION!

The next major invasion of Ger did not happen for two thousand years. Granted, the Ungathi continued to raid the western borders, and Ger fell under the sway of southern foreign kings, but the Gerwa never lost their identity. Even the dynasties of the foreign kings became more and more Ger-like, and when the foreign rulers were finally ousted and the Kiani restored, no one could tell the difference. Ger was secure for a period of time that outlasted many Melkoni cities. However, when disaster struck the island nation of Ouwathia Oulermo, its people fled. Those Hulathi – who for generations bound the known world together with trade, knowledge, and guidance – found themselves refuges among the kingdoms of the world. Several ships fleeing from the sunken land arrived on the shores of Ger and the Hulathi sued for peace and land to settle. The Kiani at the time was a haughty and proud ruler; she told the Hulathi that if the gods condemned their island to the abyss, the Gerwa would do the same for the survivors. The Hulathi survivors did not take well to this response and set the harbour of Gernhi ablaze in the ensuing violence. The Hulathi refugees claimed the city of Gernhi for forty years, ruling it as a colony of Ouwathia Oulermo, much as their sisters and brothers founded the Grand Kingdoms of the War Road. Eventually, the kingdom of Ger ousted the Hulathi, slaughtering most of its inhabitants and forcing the rest back into the northern Green Sea. Some joined their brethren in the Grand Kingdoms – which is why Lukka bore Ger such enmity for the whole of its existence – while others retreated to the ruins of Ouwathia Oulermo, where they became known as the Wahdj-nefru, the Green Pirates. To this day, the Wahdj-nefru plague the coasts of Ger and Melkon.

THE APOSTASY AND RECENT HISTORY

Neferu shared that only once in the history of Ger did they fail in their sacred duty to uphold Ahote's divine order. Nearly 700 years ago, a southern Hekas arrived in Ger and took control of the kingdom by claiming the throne of Kianhi and banning the worship of the Six and the Eight. This Hekas – some now believe she was of the Ungathi – attempted to convert the Gerwa to the worship of a foreign god; however, after fourteen generations, the priests slew this Hekas, retook the thrones of the eight cities, and restored the rulership of the Kiani. Since then, the Gerwan enmity for the Ungathi rivals the Luathi's hatred toward the Takan. Each Kiani sends warriors, gold to supply them, and craft folk to rebuild and reinforce the border fortresses that stand along Ger's western and southern borders.

(I did not pry, but this story of a southern Hekas seemed to be a gloss for a foreign dynasty that ruled over Ger for a time. It is suspect that a single queen would rule for half a millennium, and why would Neferu refer to a queen as a 'Hekas'? I assumed it referred to the outcast nature of the dynasty, and the queen's name – Hamahaj-emri – supported my theory, as it is not a Gerwan name. However, Neferu stubbornly clung to the tale I shared; thus, I recorded it as it was related to me.)

Since this time, the Gerwa have enjoyed a renewal of their culture, faith, and glory. Aahomentep, the Kiani over all others, rules from Kianhi and Ger stands united. They continue to wage a war with the Ungathi tribes to the west, pushing them further back into the Ungathi Desert. Neferu speaks about the death of the tribes and the Gerwa carrying the war all the way to 'Uman.' I have never heard of this kingdom, but it apparently exists beyond the desert, and while Neferu speaks of it with the same vehemence as she does the Ungathi, she refused to elaborate. I fear, though, this is the Gerwan heart at this time. They are strong, their army is powerful, and their gods are responsive. I believe their hunger for war and dominance will not be sated in the west, and within our lifetime they will turn their spears and arrows to the east and north.

THE SIX AND THE EIGHT

There are a great many similarities between the Pantheon of Melkon and the Six and the Eight of Ger. Both divide history into two rules. The first – that which came before – was an untamed time, when coarser deities ruled the world, carved its bones, and raised the great natural wonders. This rule gave way to the rule of today, with Araton (or Aahote, as the Gerwa call him) in command of the cosmos. Unlike the Pantheon of blessed Melkon, which cleave the gigantes and the titans from the heavens, the Gerwa worship their living gods – the Eight – but also revere the Six. Neferu explained that the Eight are extenuating gods – the Gerwa worship them because they promise order, law, and paradise in the next world – while the Six are castigative in nature. Another Gerwa explained to me she draws the sight of the Eight in toward Ger through sacrifices and worship, but wards herself against the Six and offers oblation to keep their sight focused beyond Ger. Even the Gerwa's simple rituals reflect this truth. When a Gerwa lies down to sleep, they place the statues of the Eight closest to their head – with the images turned toward them – to watch over them while they sleep. They place the statues of the Six at their feet and turn the images' faces outward, which wards them while they sleep.

While the Gerwa openly worship the Eight, with temples in all the major cities of Ger and the prime temple in the city that bears the god or goddess' name, the temples and priesthoods of the Six take on roles like those of the cthonic cults of blessed Melkon – such as Ceenon's cult. They keep to the shadows, people whisper about them, and if someone needs to call on them, there are ways for the average Gerwa to access their cults. I will share what I have gleaned of the Six and the Eight, adding my commentary and observations on the nature of the Gerwa beliefs.

THE SIX

The Six are cthonic deities that now lie entombed beneath the earth, or so the general populace believes, across Ger. The Gerwa believe they still influence the world, primarily for ill, and will do so until the day they rise again. The Six bear a striking similarity to the gigantes and titans of Melkon. The story to which I give most credence tells this tale: after the Six created the world, a great foe arose in the west. For generations, this foe took the Gerwa out of the lands of their birth and into the west to be slaves. Eventually, the Six were overthrown, cast down, and severed – their bodies cast about Ger. But their children, the Eight, ended the war. They brought order to the world of the Six and buried their forebearers in great necropolis tombs, to await the cycle of rebirth. Those eschatological prophecies say when the world has collapsed to ruin once again, and the castes fail, and chaos spreads across the face of the earth, the Eight will lay down their stewardship of the earth and the Six will rise to destroy, cleanse, and rebuild the world for the next cycle. Until then, the priests of the Six keep their dreaming gods' attention facing outward, away from Ger, where their influence is felt among the other peoples of the world. As was told to me, I now share with you: the names of the Six were purposefully forgotten. The Gerwa have a strange tradition: to keep the dead from returning to plague the living, they never refer to the dead by name. Instead, they use different names, metaphors, or entirely new names to refer to them. When I asked about their own history – with the Kiani Mim and Ramphisiteru – Neferu assured me those names were but regalia for the dead Kiani. By Araton, the Gerwa are a strange people! What I have gleaned of the Six from my discussions with Neferu and others, I share here.

Father of Water

The oldest of the Six, the Father of Water, is depicted as a massive sea serpent that could swallow multiple Melkon ships in a single bite. All creation was born from the Father of Waters and the Lady of Heaven. Today, the Gerwa invoke the Father of Water to send chaos, death, and dissolution against their foes. Any such breaking down or destruction is attributed to the Father of Waters. Serpents and yammim are considered sacred to him.

Lady of Heaven

Above the Father of Water – brought into existence mere moments after the Father arose – is the Lady of Heaven. Her domain was ordering the astral realms; the first fruit of her mind are the stars, the moons, and chief among them, the sun. For generations, the Father and the Lady stared at each other, each disdaining the work of the other. But there was only so much each could contrive on their own. So, one day, according to the Gerwan tales, they looked on each other with desire, and from their union was born the first of their children: the Flesh of the Earth. Upon their daughter's back the Father and the Lady wrought many marvels; they raised mountains, grew forests, and crafted beasts. The Gerwa invoke the Lady of Heaven to watch over their enemies and grind them beneath the iron rim of her wheel of fate.

Flesh of Earth

The first daughter of the Six – the Flesh of the Earth – arose from her father's waters to draw nearer to her mother's light. The trees, the beasts of the fields, and the crawling things sprung up on her back. The birds of the air rested in her bosom, and the fish of the sea drew near to her shores. In her rage at her father's chaos and her mother's distance, the Flesh of the Earth brought forth monsters, hybrid beasts, and other fiends – such as the spirits of disease. Through their passion and in response to her rage, the Father of Water and the Lady of

Heaven brought the twins – the Balance of the World and the Eye of Wisdom – into being to curtail the Flesh's destruction. The Gerwa invoke the Flesh of the Earth to strike down their enemies' flesh, fields, and folds.

Faces of the Moons

The Lady labored alone in the vaults of the firmament and brought the Faces of the Moons – the goddess who tends to Kalypsis' moons – into being. Faces of the Moons' self-dance takes her throughout the heavens in a complex pattern, which Gerwa sooth-seers study to practice augury of the future. Those who visit the temples of or invoke the name of the Faces of the Moons pray she will turn away and send the worst of all futures out away from Ger.

Balance of the World

One of the twins birthed to counter the rage and destruction of the Flesh of the Earth, the Balance of the World seeks to mediate the Father of Waters' chaos and the Lady of Heaven's static order. Humanity is the Balance of the World's offspring; he sought something new to mediate heaven and earth, stewards who would war against the chaos and monsters of the world. He took flesh from the Flesh of the Earth and asked the Lady of Heaven to inspire the forms he created with astral light. It was only after the first humans awoke that the Six realised the Father of Water had deceived them, for he instilled within the nascent humanity a touch of the abyss – the chaos that churned within the deep. The Gerwa claim all evil within the human soul and mind spring from this deception. It is also the source of humanity's mortality, as the Eye of Wisdom recognised the danger of immortal beings so touched by chaos. The Gerwa invoke the spirit of the Balance of the World in the same way many invoke the evil eye: to rob others of their blessings in the hope they will flow back to Ger and be redistributed.

Eye of Wisdom

The final deity of the Six is an enigma. She seems to appear late in the cycle of the Six, later even than her 'twin,' the Balance of the World. It is said death entered the world through her, yet Gerwan tradition holds that she gifted humanity with medicine, weaving, farming, and metallurgy to hold back the curse of death for as long as possible. Tales about the Eye of Wisdom are few, and even those few are not well known by most Gerwa. This made it difficult to gather information, as I sifted through many contradictory tales, stories, and myths. What the Gerwa do know is the Eye of Wisdom birthed her son, Djhutemos, right before her death, and she gave him the Tablets of Law. The Gerwa who invoke the Eye of Wisdom do so to curse and blind their enemies, hoping the gods will see their enemies as fools. When someone unwittingly trespasses against the Eight, they are said to have 'closed the Eye of Wisdom.'

THE EIGHT

In a tale that echoes the Gigamachiad, the Six warred with new, foreign gods, who arose in the west (leading to the common Gerwa saying 'On the wings of the west does trouble fly through Ger'). One by one, the Six were slain and dismembered by these nameless foes. The ancient scrolls and traditions of the Gerwa state, "*In those days, darkness, locusts, and blood flowed to surround Ger. As each of the ancient ones fell, Ger was threatened by the abyss. Boils, pestilence, wild beasts, and hail afflicted the Gerwa, but their prayers were not answered. For no one could hear them until the birth of Djhutemos, who gathered the Eight and raised them up with the wisdom of the world which was before.*" The Eight repelled these mysterious attackers, recreated the order of the world, and from Ger – so they say – order reestablished itself. The world was remade, though lesser than it once was. Still, Ger survived and thrived due to the secret knowledge Djhutemos bore out of the previous order. Neferu, as a hemet-netjer of the Eight, was able to enlighten me concerning the Eight in ways she was unable to do with the Six.

Aahote

Aahote is the divine Kiani – the last child of the Father of Water and the Lady of Heaven – and is known as the 'severed' god. He led the Eight to victory in the war against the west, was betrayed by a jealous brother, was slain, and was reborn – thanks to the efforts of his wife-sister, Amendiris. His youngest son, Mim, became the first mortal Kiani of Ger. Aahote rules from his temple-palace in Kianhi. It is his rulership, and the guidance of his descendants, that keep Ger sacrosanct and defended in the eyes of her people. The Gerwa pray to Aahote for guidance, wisdom, and endurance in the face of trials.

Amendiris

Aahote's elder sister and wife, Amendiris is the goddess of queens and mother to all Gerwa. She is a powerful warrior in her own right, but when her daughter, Henutmehut, was born, she gifted her daughter with the defence of Ger's borders. Amendiris' protection extends now to the defence of hearth, health, and home. She is enthroned in Kianhi as queen of the gods and in Amendehi as the mother of Ger. The Gerwa pray to her for health, prosperity, wisdom, and safe childbirth.

Henutmehut

Firstborn of Aahote and Amendiris, Henutmehut is the goddess and patron of the Gerwan warrior caste. A violent and passionate deity, the Gerwa often speak of her in the same way the Melkoni do Ryla. Indeed, most Melkoni see her as an incarnation of Ryla in the south. Depicted often as having the head a hippopotamus, Henutmehut is the defender of Ger's borders. Here is the story of how she also came to be the patron deity of brewers. During the reign of Heka (see the Hekas below), Aahote asked Henutmehut to slay all Gerwa who worshipped and subjugated themselves to Heka. However, in her fury, she could not tell the difference between righteous and unrighteous Gerwa. Faced with their extinction, the Gerwa cried out to the Eight for salvation. Djhutemos heard the cries of the righteous and came up with a plan. He told all the brewers in Ger to dye their brews red, the colour of blood, and had them pour it all into the Kephut river. Henutmehut saw the river of blood, stopped to drink of it, and became so inebriated she passed out. When she awoke, the rest of the Eight were able to reason with her and halt her rampage. The Gerwa pray to Henutmehut for defence and protection, especially when going to war.

Bebis

The second child of Aahote and Amendiris, Bebis is the god of the herds on the Gerwan plains. He ensures the beasts of the field multiply and remain plentiful so Ger can survive. As the god of beasts, he is the patron of the herder castes. The Gerwa pray to him for bounty, health of the herds, feasts, and the wealth the great herds of Ger bring into the city. Bebis rules from his grand temple in Reynhi, located in the western plains of Ger.

Djhutemos

The child of the Eye of Wisdom, Djhutemos inherited the lost lore of the last age and guides Ger with his wisdom. He stands apart from the Eight, due to his unusual lineage and his hoarding of secrets. Still, it was Djhutemos who gathered and rallied the Eight, and who still advises Aahote, so his place in the kingdom of Ger is secure. The craftsmen of Ger pray to him for inspiration; others pray to him for wisdom and revelation.

Kaapher

Kaapher, Aahote and Amendiris' third child, created – with Djhutemos – the Gerwan script, from which they claim all other languages descended. While there is no proof of this, one can see the basis for other letters – such as those from Luathi and Melkoni texts – echoed in their hieroglyphs. As such, Kaapher is the patron of scribes and traders, who use the written word for Ger's benefit. Her temple stands in Yalonhi, on the southern border of Ger.

Kephut

Kephut is neither a child of Aahote nor of the Six. Her priests claim she has always existed – like Ger itself and the river that bears her name. Since the river provides fertile ground for the plants and animals of Ger, Kephut is known for her role in fertility. The Gerwa invoked her during conception, while travelling on the waters of the world, and by those who brew beer. Her temple stands in Gernhi, at the mouth of the great river.

Anu

The last fully divine son of Aahote and Amendiris, Anu is the lord of the dead. It is his role to judge and rule over those who die in service to the Eight. After death, a Gerwa's body is mummified. This process takes sixty days, during which the ukuku lead the ba of the deceased through the Reed sea to Anu's courts in the Silent Lands. Those who lived wicked lives are lost forever in the reeds; they never find peace and are cursed to wander the marshlands for eternity. Those who make it to the courts of Anu are judged, and those whose deeds are righteous according to Aahote's code are reunited with their bodies and live out their days in Anu's realm, before they die once more and their bas return to Ger in the land of the living. Those who are found wanting are tormented by Anu's adepts and the ukuku until their ba is purified, then they also return, but in a lower caste. Anu's temple is in the necropolis of Anuhi, in central Ger.

HEKAS - THE NECESSARY OUTCASTS

The Gerwa who travel the War Road most are those called 'Hekas.' The meaning of this Gerwan word is lost in the antiquity of their kingdoms, but it seems closely related to *magos* of Mouadran and *goés* in Melkon. However, Neferu hinted it goes beyond that. She relayed several derisive tales about the origins of the Hekas; the tale I share here seems to ring of truth more than all the others. A thousand years ago, there was an ancient *Kiani* of Djhutehi named Heka. This Kiani was a tyrant – he flaunted the orders of the gods, delved Djhutemos' pyramid temple, and stole the knowledge of the gods for himself. Additionally, he fed off the flesh of his people, consuming their blood and – if Neferu's wine-soaked words are true – their *ba*. The Eight called upon the hem-netjer and hemet-netjer of both the Eye of Wisdom and Djhutemos to bring down this foul Kiani; they cursed him and mummified him alive. Though the priesthoods sought to cleanse the world of Heka's work, an apostate stole his *grammatikós*, which became the foundation for the Hekas.

The Hekas see power outside the divine order. Through their understanding of nature and the natural world, they create potions, unguents, and other imbued effects to provide aid and power to those whom the gods abandon (this is how Chaths, the Hekas I found in Yalonhi, explained it to me). The Hekas believe they provide an agnostic route to safety and health outside the order of the gods. Chaths grew quiet when I asked where the Hekas' power comes from, but finally explained that the Hekas draw on principles that are repeatable, but not understood. They render the essences of the world for their rites, drawing on what the philosophers of blessed Melkon would call 'first principles'. Damned as he was in the eyes of his gods, Chaths nevertheless felt the trade was a worthy one.

The Hekas fill a role in Gerwan society – greasing the system for those who cannot afford intervention by the hemet-netjer or the adepts of Anu. Their potions heal the sick, knit together the bones of the wounded, bring fertility to cows and crops, and end the lives of petty tyrants and bullies. While all Gerwa spit at the mention of the Hekas, all know where to find one when their loved ones are ill or their rivals are prospering.

IMBUED IMPLEMENTS

If a Hekas invokes Imbue Lesser Elements to create an imbued set of ritual tools for a specific rite, they count as having a trait for all aspects of that rite (invocation and activation). For example, if Ashor creates an imbued set of tools for the Dust of Geb, he makes all Dust of Geb invocation and attack rolls with a trait. This bonus only applies when the Hekas uses the appropriate ritual implements. If they are stolen, lost, or absent, the Hekas loses access to this benefit.

NEW RITES

HEKAS

The Powder of Twanta

The spirit of Anu's court, who takes the minds and spirits of those who sleep into her lord's realm, Twanta is a favorite goddess among the Hekas. Studying her rites – some say sacrilegiously stealing her power from her hemet-netjer – the Hekas may create a powder from the tears and crusted mucus of dreamers' eyes to aid others in finding more restful sleep, or at least the appearance of restful sleep in the moment.

THE POWDER OF TWANTA			
Location to learn:	**Hekas within Ger**		
Devotion Points:	3r per invocation	Clash Point Cost:	4 to ready
Tradition:	Hekas (Shadow)	Range:	Touch
Duration:	Sustained; indefinite interval, lasts until used or dismissed.		
Effect			
This powder can temporarily recover a target's lost Mettle. By blowing the powder, or inhaling it themselves, the Hekas restores 1d6 lost Mettle to the target (cannot exceed the target's maximum Mettle). Mettle recovered in this fashion immediately increases the Valour of the target by the appropriate amount. However, the target's body becomes wounded by this false vitality, inflicting one Wound on each row of Wounds. For example, if Ashor used the powder to heal Dabar of 3 Mettle damage, and Dabar was unwounded, Dabar's Valour would increase by 9 (the 3 Mettle x 3 for being unwounded). However, he would immediately suffer 1 Wound to each unfilled row. This rite creates 1 dose of the powder for the reserve cost.			
Critical success:	The amount of Mettle restored is doubled. Mettle recovered with a critical may take the target above their starting Mettle for 1 combat.		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None
Advancements			
A Deeper Mystery: the power of Twanta also lies in prophecy. By ingesting the powder, the target can forgo the Mettle recovery and instead recover 1d3 Fate Points, as they receive dreams of the future. *The Blessing of the Sleeper:* this rite now creates 3 doses of powder for a reserve cost of 6r.			

Seraph’s Token

The seraph, or king serpent, is the symbol of Kiani rulership, mysticism, healing, and venom. By crafting a small, bronze serpent into an apotropaic amulet, the Hekas can grant the seraph’s protection to the wearer from the poisons and diseases of the world.

SERAPH’S TOKEN			
Location to learn:	Hekas within Ger		
Devotion Points:	4r	Clash Point Cost:	All, when invoked
Tradition:	Hekas (Shadow)	Range:	Wearer of the amulet
Duration:	Sustained; indefinite interval, lasts until used or dismissed		
Effect			
The protective nature of the amulet increases the wearer’s Endurance against diseases or poisons by the Hekas’ Devotion (at the time of invocation) while they wear the amulet or until the Hekas dismisses the rite.			
Critical success:	Reduce the reserve cost to 2r		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None
Advancements			
Bronze Serpent: in addition to the protection provided above, the Hekas can increase the reserve cost by 3r to provide the wearer +3 Protection from Fire damage. The Devotion bonus also applies to Survival checks when travelling across one of the Zaharets’ many deserts. *Serpent’s Tongue:* in addition to the protection provided above, the Hekas can double the reserve cost of this rite and grant its bonus to the wearer’s Trade checks, as well.			

Rentic Doll

Some see this rite as the pinnacle and the depths of the Hekas' practice. Using specially prepared materials imbued by other rites, the Hekas can inscribe her *ren* (her secret name) onto a small doll. This doll becomes part of the Hekas' soul or *hewan* – 'the sum of all parts' – able to be commanded at will.

RENTIC DOLL

Location to learn:	Hekas within Ger		
Devotion Points:	8r + 8 to activate	Clash Point Cost:	All, when activated; 2 CP each round to give orders to the Rentic Doll
Tradition:	Hekas (Shadow)	Range:	The Circle of the World
Duration:	1 hour per activation		

Effect

At the cost of 2 Clash Points per round, the Hekas can order the Rentic Doll to attack. The Rentic Doll has the following profile:

Defence: Hekas' Vitality x 2%	**Combat:** Hekas' Courage x 2%
Knowledge: Hekas' Wisdom x 2%	**Urban:** Hekas' Deftness x 2%
Common: 40%	**Actions:** 1
Clash Points: 2	**Wounds:** 10

Damage: 1d6 + Damage Bonus = to the Hekas' Devotion applied on the Damage Bonus table (see Jackals page 40)

The Hekas can improve their Rentic Doll's stats by expending more shekels on its construction:

- +5% to a skill category per 100 ss.
- increase damage to 2d6 for 500 ss.
- +1 CP (to a max of 5) or +5 Wounds (to a max of 30) for 400 ss each.

Critical success:	The reserve cost is reduced to 4r		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None

Advancements

A Marked Blade: by inscribing another's true name on the Rentic Doll's blade, the Hekas ensures the named person cannot defend themselves. The Doll receives a trait on all attacks versus their named target and the target does not benefit from Protection against the Rentic Doll's attacks.

The Soul is Never Divided: the Hekas can now cast their senses into the Rentic Doll. It costs all their CP when activating this ability and for the duration of the hour. Their body falls into a sleep-like state, leaving them vulnerable to attack (they may not spend CPs while this rite is invoked). Damage provokes a hard Willpower check to see whether the Hekas can separate from their Rentic Doll and return to their body. If the Hekas' body is slain, their hewan will remain in the Doll for 3d6 days before passing into Anu's Courts.

Ukuku Token

The human need for light is a vulnerability not shared by many beasts and monsters in the wild, including the Takan. While it is no substitute for a torch, the Hekas of Ger developed this token to help them see in the darkness. It is made from the ground up horns of the ukuku owl, a sacrilege in the eyes of devout Gerwa.

UKUKU TOKEN			
Location to learn:	**Hekas within Ger**		
Devotion Points:	4r	Clash Point Cost:	2 to activate
Tradition:	Hekas (Shadow)	Range:	Touch
Duration:	1 hour after the token is activated		
Effect			
The bearer of the token sees the life in others, even in total darkness. While this does not aid them when navigating areas of total darkness, the bearer suffers no penalty to attack creatures in such situations. However, this ability does not come without hindrances, as it opens the bearer to attacks from the Silent Lands. While under the effects of this rite, the Dead and creatures with a connection to the Silent Lands (such as the Ukuku, the rathic, the dead, or Anu’s Adepts) can see the bearer and gain the I see you too trait to all attacks against the bearer. The bearer activates this token by spitting on it and wiping the wet token across each eye.			
Critical success:	The reserve cost is reduced to 2r		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None
Advancements			
Ware the Dead: while the token is in effect, the bearer receives +2 Protection against all attacks by the creatures who gain the I see you too trait. This Protection is spiritual in nature and protects the bearer from attacks that do not typically allow Protection to be applied. *A Soul’s Guide:* the bearer may speak the true name of a person. The token’s sight also provides a faint, glowing trail toward that target for the duration of the invocation.			

Red Hippopotamus’ Speed

The servants and priests of Henutmehut watch over the warrior caste of the Gerwa. The hippopotamus is a sacred animal to them – it symbolises both halves of the warrior’s role, that of slayer and protector. By invoking the red aspect of the hippopotamus, the Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer gains the speed and ferocity of the hippopotamus.

RED HIPPOPOTAMUS’ SPEED			
Location to learn:	**Temple of Henutmehut in Ger**		
Devotion Points:	5	Clash Point Cost:	1
Tradition:	Servant of the Eight (Shadow)	Range:	Personal
Duration:	Sustained; 1-minute interval		
Effect			
The Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer gains the speed of the hippopotamus, an animal known for its impressive sprint. The Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer gains +3 Movement and Initiative for the duration of the rite. This may change a Jackal’s initiative slot, which the Loremaster should adjust accordingly.			
Critical success:	Sustained; 2-minute interval		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None
Advancements			
The Red Maw: the Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer also gains the mauling ability of the hippopotamus. When they pay double the Devotion Point cost, the Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer may add their Devotion to their Strength for the duration of the rite when determining Damage Bonus. *The Hippopotamus’ Stride:* while this rite is invoked, the Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer’s pack wins all initiative ties.			

White Hippopotamus’ Hide

The servants and priests of Henutmehut watch over the warrior caste of the Gerwa. The hippopotamus is a sacred animal to them – it symbolises both halves of the warrior’s role, that of slayer and protector. By invoking the white aspect of the hippopotamus, the Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer gains the protection of the wild hippopotamus.

WHITE HIPPOPOTAMUS’ HIDE			
Location to learn:	Temple of Henutmehut in Ger		
Devotion Points:	5	Clash Point Cost:	1
Tradition:	Servant of the Eight (Shadow)	Range:	Personal
Duration:	Sustained; 1-minute intervals		
Effect			
The Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer calls upon the might of the white hippopotamus and gains Vitality and a thicker skin. The Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer gains +1 Wound per row and +2 Protection for the duration of this rite.			
Critical success:	Sustained; 2-minute intervals		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None
Advancements			
The Hippopotamus’ Blessing: the Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer gains +1d4 Wounds per row for the duration of this rite. *The Hippopotamus Shields Its Young:* the Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer may sacrifice their +2 Protection to give all allies +1 Protection. They may make this decision at the start of each of their turns. The Protection bonus lasts until the start of their next turn.			

Kaaphar’s Tongue

Kaaphar is the Gerwan goddess of trade, writing, and accounts. She keeps the Book of the Dead for Anu – a record of all the souls in the world and all the deeds they have done. Those who invoke Kaaphar’s blessing find they often come away better in dealings with those from lands beyond Ger.

KAAPHAR’S TONGUE			
Location to learn:	Temple of Kaaphar in Ger		
Devotion Points:	3	Clash Point Cost:	1
Tradition:	Servant of the Eight (Shadow)	Range:	Personal
Duration:	1 hour		
Effect			
The Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer gains a bonus equal to their Devotion to all Influence, Trade, and Perform checks.			
Critical success:	The bonus is increased to twice the Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer’s Devotion.		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None
Advancements			
Lips of Lapis Lazuli: the rite also grants the Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer the Lips of Lapis Lazuli trait, which applies to all Trade and Perform checks. *The Passing of Shekels:* the Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer may now invoke the rite to supplement the seasonal actions Carouse, Craft or Commission an Item, Find Rumors, Acquire Patron, or Establish a Home. On a successful invocation at the start of the seasonal action phase, the Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer reduces the cost of the seasonal action by 2x their Devotion in silver shekels (4x on a critical).			

Amendiris' Raiment

Amendiris is the patron and mother of all Kiani, Gerwan noble houses, and all women who rise to power within the boundaries of Ger. Even the lowliest of Gerwa become beacons of power and grace with her blessing.

AMENDIRIS' RAIMENT			
Location to learn:	Temple of Amendiris in Ger		
Devotion Points:	4	Clash Point Cost:	0
Tradition:	Servant of the Eight (Shadow)	Range:	Personal / Line of sight
Duration:	1 minute		
Effect			
The Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer takes command of the battlefield. While this rite is invoked, they may give their Clash Points to others as a reflexive free action.			
Critical success:	The Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer's CP total is increased by 2		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None
Advancements			
Our Lives for Yours: this rite also increases the Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer's presence, causing their allies to willingly lay down their lives for the Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer. While this rite is active, all allies within 4 yards are considered to possess the Interpose talent (Jackals page 111) for attacks directed at the Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer. *The Commands of the Queen:* the Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer's commands to their allies are more potent. The Hem-netjer or Hemet-netjer may now invoke this rite for 8 Devotion Points, with an instant duration, and heal 2d6 Valour for all allies.			

EQUIPMENT

Hekas and their craftsmen hone ancient rites and arts to craft the raiment of the Kiani, the tools of the Hemet-netjer, and the weapons of their armies. Below is a sampling of their ancient practices, which Gerwan Jackals often carry as they travel along the War Road.

WARBANNER OF THE KIANI

Not for sale; must earn as a gift from a Gerwan patron for valour and service

The Kiani of Ger were among the first to use war flags and banners to identify and command troops in the field. Even Jackals now use these warbanners to declare their allegiance to a specific Kiani or deity of the Eight. The sight of an unfurled banner can rally even the faintest of hearts – assuming one knows what it means.

Effect: once per day, a Gerwan Jackal may place and unfurl a banner as their action. All allies within line of sight of the banner immediately recover Valour equal to their Courage.

SCEPTER OF THE RULING CASTE

500 ss

The scepter-mace is a symbol of the ruling caste of the Gerwan people. Forged from bronze and typically studded with silver, gems, and other precious stones, it is a symbol of rulership and command on par with the Melkoni's own boar-toothed helms. These scepters are crafted for new Kiani when they take the throne of their gods, for commanders empowered by the Kiani to act in their steads, or for generals of their armies. It is said those who bear such a scepter – often imbued with the rights of the priests of the Eight or with Hekas symbols – may renew the passions of those around them, causing those near death to stand back up and fight for their Kiani.

Effect: the scepter counts as a one-handed (1H) medium weapon. Additionally, once per adventure, the wielder may spend all their Clash Points to heal the Mettle damage of themselves or an ally. The target recovers Mettle equal to half the bearer's Wisdom. In combat, this recovered Mettle immediately applies to the target's current Valour. *For example, if Ashor used the scepter to heal Dabar of 3 Mettle damage, and Dabar was unwounded, Dabar's Valour would increase by 9 (the 3 Mettle x 3 for being unwounded).*

IKEM SHIELD

160 ss

Gerwan soldiers use this wicker shield with hide stretched over its frame when going into battle. It is a large shield with a lighter weight, which makes it easier for the soldiers to snap it into place when under arrow or javelin fire. Additionally, because of its lighter weight, it is less exhausting for the soldiers to carry while in the Ungathi Desert.

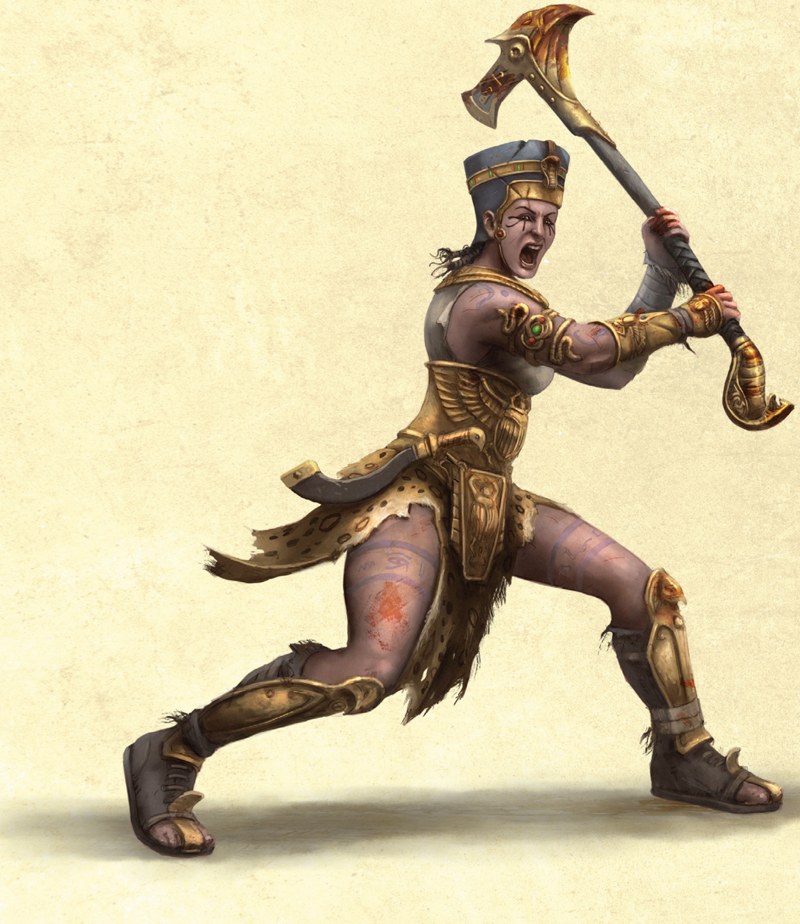
Effect: the Ikem counts as a shield with the following stats: +1 Protection/+2 Protection versus Ranged Attacks, 0 Encumbrance

MACE-AXE OF THE RIVER

350 ss

The Gerwa are known for their use of this terrifying weapon, which combines the weight of a two-handed mace with the cutting edge of an axe. The warriors of the southern cities who wield these weapons are often massive, and are known for their strange and impressive displays of strength as they spin these weapons that can cleave flesh and armour with ease.

Effect: the mace-axe counts as a two-handed (2H) Heavy weapon. The wielder's Damage Bonus is increased by one level when fighting with this weapon. *For example, Ashap has a Strength of 18, which typically grants him a +1d8 Damage Bonus die to his melee damage. When wielding this mace-axe, Ashap would instead add a +1d10 Damage Bonus die to his melee damage.*



CASTE VIRTUES

A player may choose any of these Caste Virtues in lieu of the Cultural Virtues *An Iron-like Will*, *Follower of the Six and the Eight,* or *Servant of a Ridged Order* when playing a Gerwa from one of the following castes.

MEMBER OF THE DIVINE CASTE

Members of the divine caste (page 45) occupy the highest tier of Gerwan society. As such, they are used to ruling, having authority, and being obeyed. A Gerwan Jackal with this Virtue may call upon it in situations that deal with culture, authority, intimidation, or knowledge.

MEMBER OF THE EARTHLY CASTE

Members of the earthly caste (page 46) occupy the middle tier of Gerwan society. As such, they are used to the peace hard labour brings, the joy of growth and birth, and the comforts afforded by their secure place in society. A Gerwan Jackal with this Virtue may call upon it in situations that deal with endurance, crafting, or encouraging growth and fertility, as well as when fighting for those under their care.

MEMBER OF THE WATERS CASTE

Members of the waters caste (page 47) occupy the lowest tier of Gerwan society and typically function outside the borders of Ger. As such, they are used to travel, negotiation, lore from other cultures, and trade. A Gerwan Jackal with this Virtue may call upon it when dealing with situations involving other cultures, trading, crafting, and survival on land or sea.

OUTCAST OF GER

Outcast members of society, such as Hekas (page 48) or Jackals, stand on the margins of the rigid Gerwan society. And while this means they suffer at the hands of other Gerwa for their impiety, it also gives them a unique perspective and cultural freedom those bound by caste do not enjoy. A Gerwan Jackal with this Virtue may call upon it in situations that deal with culture, authority, intimidation, or knowledge.

TEMPORARY TRAITS

EXTENUATING AID

Gerwan Jackals may spend a Fate Point to invoke the protection of the Eight. They MUST select which god they are invoking and explain how their prayers are appropriate to the situation. Should the Loremaster agree to this invocation, the Gerwa gains a new trait for the scene appropriate to the invocation.

For example, Bet is moving through an ancient Hannic ruin. Knowing the nature of old ruins, she prays to Djhutemos to guide her. Becca – Bet's player – explains to Trish – the Loremaster – that she hopes Djhutemos will aid Bet in finding and dealing with any traps in the ruins. Trish agrees this is within the scope of Djhutemos's influence, and grants Bet the trait Insight of Djhutemos, which applies to Perception, Dodge, and Mechanisms checks while in the ruins.

CASTIGATING INVOCATION

Gerwan Jackals may spend a Fate Point to invoke the punishment of the Six on their enemies. They MUST select which god they are invoking and explain how their prayers are appropriate to the situation. Should the Loremaster agree to this invocation, the Gerwa inflicts a new negative trait for the scene appropriate to the invocation.

For example, Bet and her pack attempt to sneak past a group of Wolves. She prays to The Eye of Wisdom to blind her foes to their presence. Becca – Bet's player – explains to Trish – the Loremaster – that she hopes The Eye of Wisdom will curse the Wolves, making it easier for the whole pack to sneak through their camp. Trisha agrees this is within the scope of The Eye of Wisdom's influence and inflicts the trait Dull Eyes and Ears on the Wolves, which applies to their Perception and Survival checks to detect the pack as they sneak through the camp.

If the target has a trait that conflicts with the new trait, the invocation instead negates the positive trait.

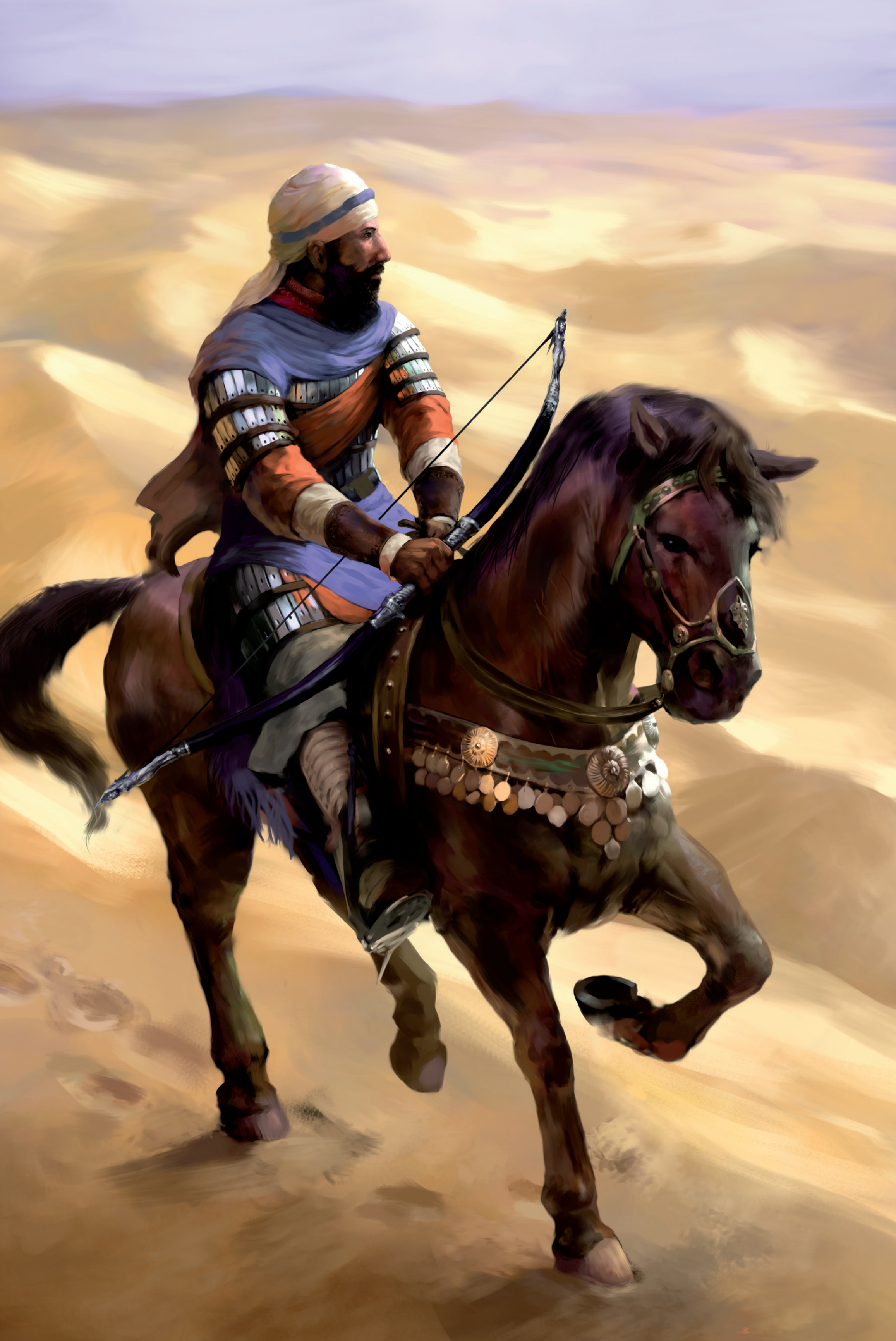
NEW ADVANCEMENT

IMBUE RITUAL ELEMENTS

This is a new advancement for the Hekas *Imbue Lesser Elements* rite. After learning this advancement, the Hekas begins to understand more about the nature of the world and how to affect change within it. When the Hekas prepares ritual elements for a rite (see *Jackals* page 86), they may select one of the following additional benefits in addition to gaining the trait. The benefit applies to that rite going forward (unless the Hekas cancels the rite and reinvokes it):

- The invocation of the rite gains a bonus equal to the Hekas' Devotion
- The Devotion Point cost is halved
- The Clash Point cost is decreased by 1 (to a minimum of 1)
- Once per season, the Hekas gains a Fate Point after successfully invoking the rite

My welcome in Ger ended abruptly when Neferu discovered my nightly excursions to see Hekas and search for the temples of the Six. So, I rode east with a caravan of Luathi who were headed into the Luasa Sands. Perhaps I can keep Neferu's wrath away from me for a time. Araton, protect me!



CHAPTER 4

BOOK 3 – OF THE TRAUJ AND THE EASTERN SANDS

Those who compare burdens and trials always walk away bearing those they brought with them.

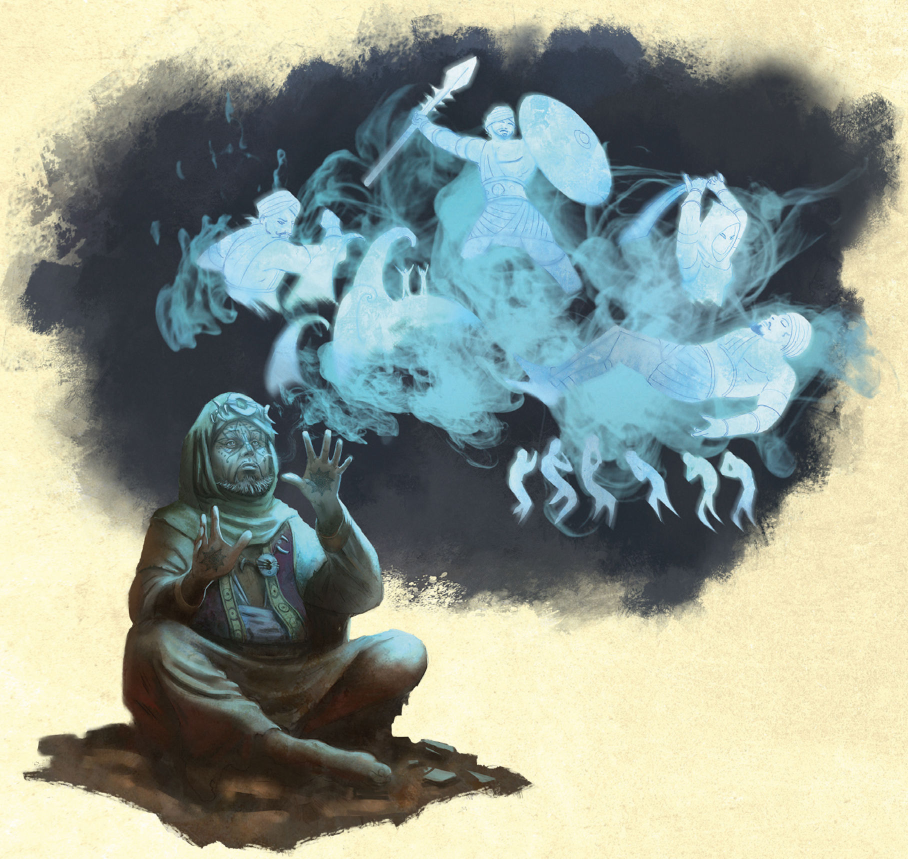
~Common Trauj saying~

The Trauj claim to be descended from giants. Their stature alone is enough to lend credence to the story, but this belief goes beyond the scope of their frames. One cannot spend time among these clans and witness the scope of their burden and not come away believing this: the Trauj bear the burdens of giants. The debt of peace the west owes these horse-folk is unknown and unrecognised.

~Akraiatos of Escanoi, *Travellers on the War Road, Book 3 - Of the Trauj and the Eastern Sands*~

THE TRAUJ – DESCENDANTS OF GIANTS AND SURVIVORS OF THE BRONZE DESERT

The caravan took the whole of the month of Salas to make the journey from Gernhi to Anahaluf, the so called Well of the World. The green plains of Johamma's Gap slowly gave way to the bronze dunes of the Luasa Sands. And by Araton, the heat was akin to that of a kiln! The *Fuetheniad* refers to this place as the *Cemarian Pellengos*, or Furnace Plains, and the poet's words rang in my heart as we travelled the oppressive desert. Six days out from Anahaluf, the caravan driver pointed out the first of the Trauj to parallel our journey. Even at that distance, we could feel the presence of the Trauj. Massive on their own, when mounted on horseback, they resemble the centaurs of blessed Melkon. The Trauj of Anahaluf welcomed us when we arrived at the shores of the massive inland sea. The shores are deceptively dune colored and blend into the horizon. The herds of the *nisakeans* (horses) the Trauj breed roam the patch of green grass that surrounds the sacred sea; when combined with the hide tents of the desert, they rob the shore of its vibrancy. It is as though the desert sands press right



up to the shore of the vast, dark sea. Hatsi, the caravan master, introduced me to Rezkakou, a Trauj Yahtahmi. Perhaps my coin purchased the formal introduction, or maybe after a month of travelling with me, Hatsi knew I would find a kindred spirit in the Trauj storyteller. Rezkakou welcomed me into his goat-hide tent, and I stood stunned in the entryway, like a pole-axed oxen.

The colors took me by surprise. The tent's interior was awash with reds, yellows, and white, accented with splashes of wine. It was here I learned Trauj have two selves, as Rezkakou explained it: the outward self and the inward self. Trauj present their outward selves to the desert and the world, hence, their clothing, horses, and settlements all blend into the desert surroundings. They take on the aspect of the desert to thrive in the desert. The *Cemarian Pellengos* bleach leather, skin, hair, and bone. However, within the shelter of their homes and the safety of their tents and clans, the Trauj remove their outward selves to reveal their inward selves. Music and colour, song and dance – these define the inward selves of the Trauj. Despite the many tales I have heard about and from the Trauj, the existence of their inward selves was the most shocking revelation of the time I spent with them.

Rezkakou shared the following story to explain the two selves of the Trauj:

> *This is the tale of the first gift. When the people arrived in the desert, we were weak from generations spent underwater. The light of the sun was too bright. The day was too hot to endure. The night was too cold to find warmth. The people – for they were not yet Trauj – cried out at the injustice of it all. Freed from the deep only to be abandoned in the Silent Lands. They would have perished in their misery, save for the arrival of Sequileasaf, the first of the three Anzaim the heavens sent to guide the Trauj. The people crouched on the edge of the desert, until Yakhia swore to cross the desert and show it was safe. Yakhia's brave soul called to Sequileasaf, who journeyed with Yakhia and gave him the first gift – the four great lessons of the Luasa Sands. The first lesson was that of water and salt – both are needed for the people to survive under the sun of the Luasa Sands. The second lesson was the revelation of the daytime roles, that some of the people must take to the sun to ensure the people survived. The third lesson was the revelation of the night roles, that some of the people must hold back the chill of the desert nights to ensure the people survived. The fourth lesson was the revelation of the outward and inward selves, that to thrive in the role the heavens gave the people – to ensure they were Trauj – they must take on the aspects of the Luasa, until the desert saw them as part of itself. Only in secret could the people reveal their inward selves – from sun and sand, from heat and chill, they must keep their inward selves hidden.*

The Trauj life has no greater shaper or influencer than the Luasa Sands. If the Trauj are a blade against the 'powers' of the East, then the Luasa Sands are the whetstone that constantly tests and sharpens that blade. The Trauj live in the desert, thrive in its extremes, pull life from its lifelessness, and raise herds, children, and clans among its wastes. It is any wonder they refer to us in the west as *hhafak rakiin*, or soft people? If what they say about the threats lurking in the east are true, then we owe the Trauj a debt. Even if the rumors are not true, the Trauj scour the sands clean of Takan – who find the desert a natural breeding ground – and produce some of the finest warriors of our age. That alone is a testament to their way of life and to the desert that hardens the souls and flesh of this people.

TRAUJ CLAN STRUCTURE

Much like the Luathi, the Trauj cleave to large family groups rather than identifying with cities or towns. When one considers their nomadic lifestyle, it is easy to see why this social structure developed. Each Trauj clan – of which there are close to twenty, according to Rezkakou – claims part of the Luasa Desert as their own. Within their territories, the Trauj clans know the ruins, wells, and hidden pasture lands that allow them to thrive. Though caravans or other clans often pass through their lands, the desert rarely yields its secrets to newcomers. Most clans travel in force through others' lands, as interclan warfare and rivalries are a constant threat in the desert – although only the Yahtahmi of the clans can accurately relate the stories as to why these rivalries and feuds exist. Only those travelling to or from Anahaluf – marked by bright green cords layered with garlands of *haluzanrab*, bound around the horses' necks – are safe from all attacks by the Trauj, as the clans hold the Well of the World to be sacrosanct and those who are on pilgrimage to its shores to be under its protection.

There are sub-clan *rayis*, leaders who rule over their extended families and their herds by virtue of their horseback, war, and leadership skills, although they are subservient to the Yahtahmi in matters of law and lore. Most clans have several Yahtahmi as advisers. The head of a clan is known as the *Azimrayis*; all other *rayis* pay tribute to them. It is the *Azimrayis'* job to keep the clan lands free of Takan, other threats from the desert, and other clans. Each year, they attend the maquirisan – grand conclave – of the clan *Azimrayis* at Anahaluf. There, during a week of feasting and competitions, the *Azimrayis* share tales of their clan from the previous year, trade goods and information, and reforge alliances among the Trauj. While there are many Trauj clans, Rezkakou openly spoke of the four that ride the eastern slopes of the A'hule Asa mountains – the western clans – with the intimate knowledge of a well-travelled storyteller.

THE FOUR WESTERN CLANS

Ashan Mudi (Arrow Clan)

Rezkakou spoke of the *Ashan Mudi*, the Arrow clan of the northern desert, first. As the westernmost Trauj clan, these people keep close ties with the Luathi of Orsem Yahan and bravely hunt Takan in the northern deserts, wilds, and hills. They are a fiercely loyal clan, bound by ancient vows to those who live deeper in the sands. Rezkakou said of all the clans, the Mudi bear the greatest hatred of the East. Though all clans hate the Takan, the followers of the Serpent Standard, and the Ironbound tree, the eastern clans trade and deal with Drembara, Kamar, and Urkosah – the kingdoms of the eastern plains. These kingdoms, which inhabit the Plains of Shimar and Mendennon, arose in the aftermath of the fall of Mouadah. According to Rezkakou, descendants of both Mouadah and the Cynaian – savage horse warriors of the northern steppes who helped the giants tear down the gates of the East – populate these kingdoms. However, the Mudi embrace ancient Trauj views and slay these descendants of the East, holding them responsible for the sins of their forefathers.

Ashan Haluzanrab (Dream Flower Clan)

Rezkakou pointed to the dream flower tattoo on his face – it is the sign he is a member of the *Ashan Haluzanrab*. This clan trades with and hires out to the Luathi of Sentem and the Gerwa of the south. This clan of Trauj cleave to the lands along the A'hule Asa. Unlike many of the other clans, they dwell in stone houses in the mountains, using the ruins of

Kelesh across the Mountains, the Nahunum, and older structures as their clan fastnesses. They take their name from the haluzanrab plant – a dark, vining flower that grows on the leeward side of the A'hule Asa, which all Trauj clans use in their rites, ceremonies, and dream quests. The Dream Flower Clan consider it their sacred duty to provide haluzanrab seeds to all Trauj. They withheld the seeds only three times in the history of the Trauj, all of which ended with the other clans besieging the mountain fastnesses of the Ashan Haluzanrab. One often encounters them in the south, among the Luathi and Gerwa, working as mercenaries and warriors and seeking glory beyond the lands of their youth. They also possess a close relationship with the Anzaim (see Jackals page 212) of the A'hule Asa, who seek out worthy members of the Ashan Haluzanrab and offer them guidance or aid.

Ashan Tasanizanrab (Blooming Flower Clan)

The *Ashan Tasanizanrab* take their name from the tasanizanrab plant: a large, lotus-like plant that floats on the surface of Anahaluf and grows in the wadis of the desert. The Trauj subsist on every part of this plant – they use the leaves and stems to wrap and scoop food, like Melkoni flat bread; they eat the seeds raw with desert honey or dry and serve them on top of yoghurts or as trail rations; and they boil and stew the root with spicy lamb meat. Rezkakou spoke of these southernmost Trauj clans with pride. He said the tales of the Tasanizanrab clan's deeds are known as far as Sacred Uman to the west, beyond the Ungathi desert, and in the lands of Raskar in the east – beyond the rising of the sun. The Tasanizanrab clan ride to war, wherever it may be. They sell their services to Ger in their battles against the Ungathi, they board ships to fight in the conflicts in blessed Melkon, and they bring back stories from abroad to the clans. Some of the tales Rezkakou shared seemed outrageous. This is but the second time I have heard of this Sacred Uman, but he spoke of floating towers, foreign gods, and strange animals. One story he told was of the Umani ants – small creatures about the size of a Gerwan cat – which dig into the ground and come up with gold dust in their fur, so that one only needs to shake the beasts to become rich. These Yahtahmi have a gift for stories that causes even this humble chronicler shame, but as for the truth of their tales, I leave that judgment to you.

Ashan Tsunazkan (Well-Dweller Clan)

Rezkakou's voice grew strangely reverent when he spoke of the *Tsunazkan* – the Trauj clan that holds the lands surrounding Anahaluf. Tamat, the ancient ancestor of the Trauj who discovered the sea of Anahaluf, founded this clan. She, along with Takahala, created much of the tradition that binds the Trauj together into one people. The way Rezkakou spoke about this Ashan was the same way the Melkoni speak about the children of the gods or the Gerwa speak about their Kiani. Other clans hold the Tsunazkan clan in high regard, as they tend to the fields and waters and provide for the clans who make the journey to the sea. They also enforce the rules of the Well of the World, such as the High Law – no Trauj may commit violence against another Trauj or guest within eyesight of Anahaluf. They act as impartial judges for major clan disputes, and while they technically host other clans who journey to the sacred sea, part of the ritual requires the visitors to give the Tsunazkan the gifts of salt and bread, making the Tsunazkan guests of all clans on the shores of the Well of the World.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A TRAUJ

The Trauj divide their days between day and night, Rezkakou related through song. Their days are dominated by the herds; those who tend to the herds spend their days out in the sands, tending to horses, sheep, goats, and camels. They drive away predators – both four- and two-legged varieties – protecting the clan's livelihood. Yoghurt, dried flat bread, and tasanizanrab leaves wrapped around dates and figs with honey are the Trauj day riders' typical fare, with long pulls of fermented mare's milk from the skins they carry. At sunset, the day riders share large meals with the family and clan in the cool of the evening, before they retire and the night walkers begin their days. The weavers, smiths, and crafters come out during this shift change; they tend to their tasks in the cool of the night. During this time, choice animals from the herds are butchered and their milks are prepared for a variety of different uses: yoghurt, cheese, and churim – the fermented mares' milk of the Trauj.

Still, herding and the meat and milk the herds produce are not the only Trauj staples. They also tend small fields in *wadis* or around oases, where they grow vegetables to supplement the herds' meat and milk. Though one can find tomatoes, cucumbers, gourds, and melons in these hidden, fertile locations, the Trauj rigorously guard them from outsiders and fellow Trauj alike. The locations of wells and wadis are considered a clan's greatest secrets and there are few crimes worse than revealing them to outsiders. Most Trauj settlements, or at least the clan's seasonal lands, are built up around these oases and *wadis*.

Many in the Zaharets consider the Trauj a drab and simple people – even I, as knowledgeable and well-travelled as I am, would have marked them similarly. However, this is merely their presentation to the world. The Luasa Sands are a hard land, and the Trauj are a hard people. They dye their clothing to match their lands, which helps them hunt and hide from the desert's greatest predators. The outsides of their tents are similarly dyed. Inside – where the Trauj feel safe, let their guard down, and embrace the finer things of life – are feasts of colors for eyes starved by the tan and bronze of the Luasa Sands. Their dances – energetic and sensual – and their music – upbeat and evocative – show the sands have not dried out the Trauj soul, as many assume.

SALT

Salt is perhaps the most important spice to the Trauj. They use it to prepare and keep food, to keep water within the body, and to prepare their dead. It is so important that their hospitality rites – similar in sacredness to the Melkoni tradition – involve salt and water. When a Trauj shares these items with a visitor, even a hated rival, they are considered clan members for the day. Refusing to share salt and water with a traveller is considered a grave insult – not only to the traveller, but to the ancestors and the Anzaim who gifted these practices to the Trauj.

The Trauj also use salt in their unique funerary rites – they pack salt around the bodies of their deceased and bind them tightly in linen, reminiscent of the mummification process in Ger. However, the Trauj do not remove any organs. They leave the salt-packed corpse out under the desert sky for a month, while the family of the deceased watches over and keep predators away from the corpse. (At the time I observed this ritual, there were a dozen linen-wrapped corpses lying in the sun after a brutal raid by the Takan.) When the month has ended, the clan takes the desiccated corpse to their clan's burial cave. Each Trauj clan has a burial cave they keep hidden from all outsiders. There, Rezkakou shared, the bodies will rest for all time. They keep the honored Yahtah at the front of the cave, so their spirits are more readily available to the Yahtahmi. Others, who have gone to their fathers, lie deeper in the caves. Rezkakou spoke of guardians, but he refused to elaborate about who they were or how they were chosen. He spoke only of the 'sacred nature' of these caves and the curses that befall any who violate them.

HORSES

One cannot attempt to discuss the Trauj and their culture without mentioning the *nisakeans*, known throughout the Zaharets as 'Trauj horses'. The Trauj refer to the animals everyone else in the Zaharets calls 'horses' as ponies. This is an adequate distinction, as Trauj horses stand a cubit or more taller at the shoulder than Gerwa or Luathi horses. Some among the Trauj say the *nisakeans* are taller and stronger than the Cynaian horses of the northern and western steppes, but I cannot say whether this is accurate or not. The nisakeans are spectacular beasts, renowned for their beauty, speed, strength, and endurance. They find sure footing on sand, grass, and stone, bearing their riders swiftly into battle. The stocky animals the Gerwa and Luathi use to pull their chariots are stunted and lesser beings by comparison.

It is these *nisakeans* that give the Trauj their fearsome reputation as horse warriors. If the Luasa Sands are the whetstone of the Trauj, the *nisakeans* are the haft of their spear. The Trauj view of war has been shaped on horseback. Their bows, constructed of composite materials – much like Gerwan bows – are small and compact, and the Trauj can fire them rapidly from horseback. Their lances are crafted to bear not only the rider's strength, but the power of the horse behind them, to drive deep without breaking on the charge. The sound of a clan charge is akin to thunder on the plains; those massed against it often flee in terror from the noise.

One would not be far off to say the Trauj prize and guard their horses better than they care for their wives or children. Great *rayis* are buried with their mounts, which are slain and salted with their masters. The Trauj do not allow any of their horses to be possessed by the *hhafak rakiin*; they will pursue anyone who steals or claims a dead Trauj's horse and hunt them down with little mercy. They make examples of these thieves, leaving their rotting corpses crucified on poles along the main caravan routes.

HOLY FESTIVALS

I relate here the holy days of the Trauj to the best of my ability. The Trauj are a deeply spiritual people, with rites and rituals much like the other cultures in the Zaharets. However, their beliefs are held in reverence and abeyance. Rezkakou spoke of the *shauqabil* or Great Longing of the Trauj, and how the Yahtah speak of a promise – a time when the deserts of the Luasa will once again spring forth with life and growing things, and when the wadis would cover the land of the Trauj. Now is not that time, and so the Yahtah guide the Trauj in their great vows – to stand against the East for as long as they have breath, and to steward the Luasa Sands until the day the promised end of longing comes. Until such a time, the Trauj mark the year much as their fellows do – with holy days and festivals. However, instead of dedicating these holy days and festivals to gods – like the Gerwan or those of blessed Melkon – or in remembrance and ritual – like the Luathi – they celebrate their ancestors' death days. It bears noting the Trauj use the old Hulathi terms for the days and months of the year. As such, I have placed their festivals in their proper setting, as well as in the common parlance.

MAQUIRISAN

The whole of Tasfoseba or Zadon's Week

This is the grand conclave of the Trauj – a time when the clans and the *Azimrayis* descend upon the shores of Anahaluf. During this week, there are feasts, celebrations, gifts, and meetings of the *Azimrayis*. While their people engage in the festivities, the *Azimrayis* speak of the Luasa Sands – its troubles and its threats – as well as the developments on the Plains of Shimar and Mendennon. They plan, plot, and call for aid and then gather to hear the Yahtahmi tell the tales, both old and new. This is the time when the clans recognise new Yahtah and share their deeds and stories, after which the Yahtahmi carry the new stories back to their respective clans. Great bonfires mark this celebration, and each clan keeps one lit through the cold nights at the end of the year. They do this to defy the darkness that grips the world at this time as well as the powers of the East, despite the fact such powers have not arisen in centuries.

UDYAHTAH

Various

Each Yahtah possesses their own feast day, which the Trauj typically celebrate on the day of their death. The Trauj celebrate with a feast that lasts from sunset to sunset, with the day before the feast usually marked by fasting and the day after taken as a day of rest and recovery. There are two types of Udyahtah: those the Trauj hold to as a people and those of a clan's Yahtah, celebrated by those of the Ashan. Sometimes, the stories of these local Yahtah find a place in the grand story of the Trauj as a whole, moving – as it were – into the minds and rites of all the Trauj Ashans. The Yahtah that appear in the rites of the Yahtahmi are among the Trauj Yahtahmi – celebrated by all Trauj. I have listed their feast days below.

Udfuenten

First Udsar of Arekon or Chief's Day of Sina

This feast day celebrates King Fuenten IV and his grand ordeal to break the gates of the east. The Trauj mark this day by reciting portions from the *Fuetheniad* and remembering those who died during the previous year. This is also the traditional day of ascension to adulthood for Trauj who have reached the age of fifteen, save for the Alkitar.

Udilou

Third Udkauma of Senon or Kauma Day of Erbe

This feast day celebrates Ilou, the first follower of the path Rezsem opened and the founder of the Alkitar. As part of this feast, the Alkitar go out to hunt and return with the heads of the eastern beasts to show the clan their value and strength. This is also the traditional day of ascension to adulthood for all Alkitar who have reached the age of fifteen.

Udlannua

Second Udaketa of Adarach or Dark Day of Hamis

This feast day celebrates the great Yahtahmi Lannua, who taught her people how to bind the dreams of spirits. Yahtahmi see to the clan's dream bindings – at least those within the clan's lands – ensuring the rathic's prison and chains hold fast.

Udrezsem

First Udqara of Mouadrach or Earth Day of Tise

This feast day celebrates the slaying of Rezsem, the Trauj who opened the door for the giants' blood to renter the world. Although counted as an Alkitar, it was not until Ilou – a Yahtahmi by training – spoke with the giants that the Trauj came to understand Rezsem's deed in its proper context. During this feast, the Trauj air their grievances, asking for forgiveness from the entire clan for their failings in the previous year, to ensure no new hatreds fester in the hearts of the clan.

Udtakahala

Second Udoura of Wainon or Oura Day of Sedis

This feast day lasts from sundown to sundown and celebrates the transition from slaves in the East to clans of the Trauj. Throughout the night, all Trauj adults wear bronze shackles on their wrists to remember their past. Children in the clans wear black, braided cords. At dawn, they all cast the shackles and cords into great fires, where the smiths craft blades from the bronze. The day is then spent having contests of strength, speed, endurance, and wit, with the newly forged blades handed out as prizes to the winners.

Udtamat

First Udafuth of Equrach or Water Day of Eser

This feast day celebrates the Trauj finding Anahaluf and founding the Tsunazkan clan. It is a grand celebration for the Tsunazkan clan, as well as a time of settling grievances among all clans. Sharing water with clans in the area renews contact between the local clans and – hopefully – ensures peace between them for another year.

Udyakhia

Third Udetia of Heruson or Path Day of Sebe

This feast day celebrates Yakhia leading the Trauj across the Luasa Sands and teaching them the ways of survival. It is the only feast day celebrated out in the open. No Trauj is allowed to spend the feast covered by the shelter of tent or cave; instead, they must all survive in the desert as their ancestors did before Yakhia's journey when he received the three Anzaim gifts.

Udzahra

First Edetia of Senon or Path Day of Erbe

This feast day celebrates Zahra taming the *nisakeans* from the Flood of Darkness' herds. Yahtahmi say these *nisakeans* were flesh-eating monsters with fangs and claws – creatures of the East, bred for carnage. Zahra not only stole a sire and a dam for the Trauj herds, she bred their monstrous strength and ferocity into the herds, adding these traits to the Cynaian horses' legendary endurance. The Cynaians joined with Fuenten's ordeal (see page 90) and the Trauj inherited their initial herds of horses from them. Now, all Trauj horses descend from Zahra's deeds. Trauj who attained adulthood within the last year are given their first horse at this time.

Note that Loremasters are encouraged to assign new Udyahtah to their Trauj clans. All Trauj who die with 20+ Glory (see the 'Inscribe Glory' seasonal action on page 104) will find their death day is a new Udyahtah for their clan. After several generations, such Jackals may find their Udyahtah as a new high holy day for all Trauj.

Mekinok, Hatsaa, and Udalwan

See page 21

The Trauj celebrate these festivals in a similar fashion as the Luathi. Neither the Yahtahmi nor the Hasheers could tell me how or why the Trauj came to call these festivals by similar names or possess similar rites for them. I suspect, as we have similar rituals in blessed Melkon, they extend beyond memory into the time of the Grand Kingdoms. We all inherited a world that was not our own and possess knowledge unearned and unremembered.

TRAUJ JACKALS

It should come as no surprise that many Trauj seek out the life of a Jackal. One must live a life worthy of remembrance to ensure a place among the honored Yahtah. There, I see a spirit within the Trauj to rival that of my own Melkoni. The way one survives in Hakides' halls is to be remembered after death. When forgotten by the living and remembered by none, only then can it truly be said one is dead and lost. In the same way my people seek *kleos*, the Trauj seek *mavok* – glory, to live forever in the minds and stories of the Trauj. Thus, there are always Trauj journeying along the War Road, joining packs of Jackals. They often become the backbone of such packs. Of the myriad reasons a Trauj of any age might leave the desert behind to take up with a pack, there are three that stand out: a passion for *mavok*, a calling to bind creatures on the Dream Road, or a need to satiate a blood rage.

MAVOK

The Trauj passion for *mavok* rivals a Melkoni's for kleos. Many feel they will not gather enough mavok in the Luasa, so they take on jobs and roles outside the desert. The Zaharets, especially the lands of the Gerwa and now Adaanshummar, always have need for those skilled with bronze and rite. These needs are a siren's call to those Trauj consumed with *mavok*.

A CALL TO BIND

The Trauj have a special relationship with the *Hetiamulak* or the Dream Road. Some, like the Yahtahmi, seek out creatures and spirits to bind; others are haunted or hunted by such spirits. Even from within their prisons, these rathic are known to reach out into the world to influence those who may free them. Trauj so haunted often make pilgrimages to ensure the bindings are strengthened and the cracks in the prison are sealed. Often, these Trauj require additional Jackals to aid them in dealing with whatever mortal foes the spirits have drawn to their cause.

A BLOOD RAGE

The drive to become a Jackal is in the Alkitars' blood. They are filled with a poisonous rage that must be leeched out on their enemies' bodies if they wish to survive. Though Takan and those of the Serpent Standard exist in the Luasa Sands and further to the east, the Alkitar find that hunting them there is either too easy or infrequent to slake the passions of their blood. Instead, they turn their eyes to the west, where Takan are still found in hordes – as was seen during the Unification War. This lure is powerful for Trauj, even those not of the Alkitar lineage. To test themselves against the Takan in their element and to drive back the darkness so civilisation can thrive, these are songs that stir the blood of all Trauj.

TRAUJ HISTORY

Rezkakou was initially reserved when I asked about the history of the Trauj, that is until he recognised we were kindred spirits. Like the Yahtahmi, I seek to preserve the deeds of the worthy, the great, and the mighty. After I explained my relationship with the muse and the goal of my work, Rezkakou accepted me as an honorary Yahtahmi and invited me to one of their bathing tents. As we sat naked in the humid heat, with the seeds of the haluzanrab popping and smoldering on the brazier, he finally shared some of the oral history of the Trauj, which I recount here.

THE DROWNING

All Trauj stories begin with the phrase, '*In those days, giants strode the earth, and we stood tall among them.*' The Trauj speak of their earliest memories as the 'Drowning,' a time when a great darkness emerged from the East and flooded their ancestral lands. When the flood retreated, not only was the verdant land of the Trauj reduced to the desert of the Luasa Sands, but the Trauj were enslaved by the waters. In their tales, the waters were populated by *yammim* – great sea serpents that fed on the Trauj, enslaved them, and '*ground them down with weights and burdens, reducing them in stature from the glory of old.*' While none would mistake the Trauj for true giants, the explanation of their great height finds its roots in these stories and times. For time unremembered, the Trauj labored under those who bore the Serpent's Standard, their hatred growing. As Rezkakou recounted this story, I could not help but draw parallels between it and the Luathi stories of the Uprising. Both were enslaved by the darkness and evil of Mouadah and bear the scars, spiritual and cultural, from that time – literally in the case of the Trauj, and by Mouadah's beasts in the case of the Luathi. Perhaps when I return to the West, I will linger for a season or two at the Scriptorium of Ameena Noani and together with several Hasheers, investigate these tales and their meaning for the Luathi.

THE LIBERATION

The next great movement in Rezkakou's tales was the Liberation. After a time, the giants in the west could no longer tolerate the evil and darkness of Mouadah or ignore the groaning of the Trauj. '*The fullness of the sin of the East ripened, like grapes on a vine, and the lords of the giants were sent to the harvest with blood and bronze.*' They rallied great hosts and poured over the A'hule Asa. Finding the *Cemarian Pellengos*, the giants struggled to cross the unexpected desert, but emerged onto the Plains of Shimar and threw down Mouadah and its dark temples to rathic, and scattered its peoples. The Trauj were liberated by this act, swearing undying oaths of fealty to the giants. The last of these giants drew the Trauj west, back into the Luasa Sands, and charged them to tame the desert and keep watch over the ruins of the east. When I examined the records at the Scriptorium of Ameena Noani and the Melkoni works – such as the *Fuetheniad* – these tales seemed to correspond to the ordeal of Fuenten IV, who led the final hosts of the Hulathi and the Grand Kingdoms against Mouadah, shattering its gates and reducing them to rubble. The Grand Kingdoms perished in the decades after this victory due to the hubris of Fuenten and the foul whispers of magos he took into his council from Mouadah, which led to the ruin of the Grand Kingdoms in the far north – but that story moves away from the tales of the Trauj. Still, it does raise the question of whether there may be a link between the Trauj and the Grand Kingdoms, and perhaps Kelesh across the Mountains?

THE INVESTMENT

At first, the Trauj floundered under their charge. They were recently freed slaves, left in the desert by supernatural rescuers who did little more than give them a vast charge before leaving or dying. Rezkakou spent hours of our night recounting the tales of the Yahtah from this time. The stories of Zahra, Ilou, and Takahala, the first Yahtah – which means something akin to honored ancestors – are foundational to the Trauj clans' identities and provide guidance and wisdom for the Trauj in the same way the tales of Araton and the demigods do for the Melkoni. It was during this period the Trauj found Anahaluf and established the clans and the rites of the Yahtahmi. However, the Trauj were not yet bound together as a people, and they fell into the predictable patterns of war.

THE CLAN WARS AND THE SCOURING

Within three generations of gaining their freedom, Rezkakou said, the Trauj went from being slaves, to free people, and back again to slaves of hate. They warred with each other for land, ruins, wells, and for glory among the ancestors. Rezkakou spoke of this time with something akin to shame in his voice, saying the Trauj lost their way so soon after the gift of their freedom and were doomed to become like the soft people across the mountain. This path was stayed, however, by the intervention of an event known among the Trauj as 'the Scouring'. At this time, great dreams arose in the Luasa – dreams that tormented and fed on Trauj souls. These dreams were formless and foul spirits, and they summoned the tatters of the Mouadah Takan. They set up small kingdoms throughout the Luasa, and for a time it seemed as though the Trauj would again be subsumed by the darkness of the East. However, two people changed the course of Trauj history and culture: Lannua and Rezsem. Lannua, a Yahtahmi, found ways to bind the dreams, ending their evil and preventing them from returning to torment the Trauj. At the same time, the fury of the giants of old possessed Rezsem – a slave in one of the dream kingdoms – and he led his people in a bloody revolt, only to be put down by the Trauj for so great a rage possessed him that he was unable to end it. It was Ilou who learned from Rezsem's tale and found the path of the Alkitar. Again, the Sands were stained red and black, but the Trauj cleansed the sands of their ancient foes and rediscovered their purpose. Since then, the Trauj cleave to the ways of the Yahtahmi and stand their ground against the powers of the East to keep the 'soft folk' across the mountains safe.

RECENT HISTORY

The Trauj retreated from the stage of the world during the time of Barak Barad, dealing with their own Takan and rathic battles in the desert. However, when Shumma arose among the Luathi and spent her time in the Luasa (see page 21), she gathered allies among the Trauj. When she led the Uprising, Rezkakou said, the Trauj joined with her and with the tribes of the Luathi. While the *Shalapher* does not speak of this, many Hasheers I spoke with while I was in Ameena Noani hold this to be true. Since that time, the Trauj work with the Luathi to cleanse their lands of the Takan, and they played a significant role in the final battles of the Unification War. They opened trade with the Luathi, welcoming caravans, hiring on as guards, and joining Jackal packs. Yes, Trauj are becoming a welcome sight in Adaanshummar.

THE YAHTAH AND THE YAHTAHMI

One cannot speak of the Trauj and ignore the presence and influence of the Yahtah and the Yahtahmi. The stories they share are meaningful to the Trauj in the same way the epics and laws are meaningful to the Melkoni. The Trauj abide under the tales but the stories also surround them, creating ritual practices for the clans' daily lives. The tales inform the Trauj of their place in the grand history of the world and the deeds of their ancestors; they also not only establish the Trauj laws and taboos but explain why they exist. Each story is linked to an ancestor, much as the Gerwa would attest a city's establishment or rule to Aahote, or the Melkoni to Araton. The link between Trauj history, their ancestors, and their storytellers is inexorably linked. As Rezkakou shared their stories with me, I could not help but wonder how much the stories might change over time, or whether they remained static once told? The Trauj do not write down the tales of the Yahtah – the honored ancestors who roam the Dream Road and whose deeds guide and influence their descendants to this day. Instead, the Trauj have Yahtahmi. If the Yahtah are 'those worthy of song,' then the Yahtahmi translates roughly as 'the singers of those worthy of song.' The Yahtahmi spend most of their time travelling among the clans, acting as leaders, guides, and lawgivers. They take on the same roles as those of the Luathi judges or the Melkoni councils. When they discover a Trauj child with the spark of a storyteller in their travels, the Yahtahmi will take the child on as an apprentice. Under the close tutelage of the Yahtahmi, the young Trauj learns the tales of their clan and of the great ancestors. They spend years learning the Yahtahmi's rites, stories, and rituals; then they study the rules for the stories, the frameworks, and the stories themselves. They must recite the stories perfectly and face harsh punishments for making the slightest mistake. Rezkakou explained that once an apprentice knows the rules and the stories so well that they are engraved on the apprentice's soul, the apprentice knows how and when to bend or break the rules and stories. Aided by the haluzanrab, the Yahtahmi takes their apprentice to the Dream Road for the first time, introduces them to the Yahtah, and begins their tutelage in dream walking and binding. Only after an apprentice completes a solo journey into the Dream Road and spends a season within them are they truly called Yahtahmi.

I pressed Rezkakou for more information about the Yahtah that dwell among the Dream Road, as these Trauj ancestors bear little resemblance to the dead in the Silent Lands or Hakides' or Anu's courts. Rezkakou shared that not all Trauj go to the Dream Road to dwell with the Yahtah until the end of this age. Those who are unworthy – or worse, disgraced – travel to the Silent Lands, and Rezkakou does not know what becomes of them. Not even the ancestors speak of this, according to the Yahtahmi. That they go down to *makenzil yakalim* – the house where none speak – aligns with the way the rest of the people in the Zaharets understand the Silent Lands. However, the blessed ancestors live forever, watching over the Trauj and their descendants. When I mentioned worship of the Yahtah to Rezkakou, he grew angry and said, "*Never would any Trauj right in mind, form, and deed, worship the ancestors. Worship is not for them, as they tell us. They are only stewards of the Trauj lands and peoples, to hold until the sea crown returns to the one who will hold it forever.*" Strangely, he would say no more. I fear he revealed more than he meant to in his momentary anger, but my curiosity, now kindled, refused to be thwarted. Instead, I found myself forced to change my line of questioning.

THE MOUADYAHTAH

Rezkakou shared that not all the Yahtahmi tales are solely concerned with the Yahtah. The stories of some Trauj – through their actions or circumstances – become a warning tale for all Trauj. Due to corruption, pride, or bloodshed, these Trauj fall into damnation; they, too, live on in the minds of the Trauj as *mouadyahtah*: the dark ones. They flee to the uttermost parts of the Dream Road, leading other Trauj down their paths. It is the duty of the Yahtahmi to bind these ancestors as they would dark dreams and spirits, to ensure their sin does not spread to consume the earth. According to Rezkakou, this is one of the Yahtahmis' primary guardianship roles and a main reason they head into the Dream Road.

THE DREAM ROAD AND DREAM BINDING

While I was sweating in the heat of the tent and feeling the heady effects of the *haluzanrab*, I inquired about these Dream Roads of which Rezkakou spoke. They bind the world together, Rezkakou said. The Trauj did not create them, they merely inherited the giants' knowledge. The great spirits who allied with the giants taught them to walk the Dream Road, bodily. Travelling the Dream Road enable the Yahtahmi to interact with the Yahtah, seek their wisdom, and bind dreams. There are creatures in our world – spirits of great power and evil – that roam the wastes, formless and bodiless. They cannot be permanently slain; mortals can only hope to banish them for a time, as these spirits are cunning and find their way back from the abyss. Much like the exorcism rites of the Gerwa and the Luathi, the Yahtahmi are called to deal with such spirits. However, rather than abjure them back to the Silent Lands for a time, the Yahtahmi seek to imprison them in the corners of the Dream Road, or the *Hetiamulak*. The Yahtahmi can use their rites to take a formless spirit and bind it to an area of the world – an anchor to keep the spirit's prison in the Dream Road. This not only keeps the spirit removed from the world, but also prevents it from returning to the Zaharets, which typical exorcism rites eventually allow due to their fading power. Some Yahtahmi take this process further, using the bound spirits for power and information, or as weapons. Rezkakou's spit hissed on the coals of the brazier as he spoke about these Yahtahmi. It is clear traditionalists see them as outcasts who stray too close to the ways of the East. Rezkakou's comments about the Alkitar hunting down these Yahtahmi led us further into the Trauj traditions.

ALKITAR

Even as far away as Escanoi in blessed Melkon, we have heard the tales about the ragers of the Luasa Sands. Rezkakou spoke about them with as much reverence as he did the Yahtah. It was though he were speaking of the very giants of old that liberated the Trauj. It seems the Trauj believe the Alkitar are possessed – not by the Yahtah, but by the spirits of the great giants that freed them. According to the tales of the Yahtahmi, the Alkitar possess the fury of the giants against the deprivations of the East, its works, and its beasts. However, this fury also consumes those who possess it, forcing the Alkitar to perform greater and greater deeds of greatness before they finally succumb to their hatred or its objects. There is little rhyme or reason to an Alkitar's appearance, as the Yahtahmi see it. The Alkitar take in those marked at an early age and train them to tap into the violence of the giants within them. There are several stone ruins in the Luasa Sands that function almost as cloisters of Alkitar. They are typically marked by gruesome fetishes and talismans made from creatures and beasts the Alkitar slayed.

I can confirm the Alkitar have a supernatural battle rage that falls upon them when they face the so-called 'beasts of the east.' This includes the Takan, of course, but also those who walk the Forbidden Way, the Dead, rathic, and – according to Rezkakou – the legendary Skessh of ruined Keta. When facing such foes, a rage so potent the Alkitar froth and bleed and howl grips them, causing them to attack with such ferocity they often injure themselves. Still, their efficiency against the Takan cannot be overstated. I have seen an Alkitar stand against a dozen Takan, laughing maniacally as he took his enemies down into the Silent Lands with him. Their hatred is the primary reason Alkitar become Jackals – to seek out Takan and those of the Serpent Standard beyond the Luasa Sands, since the Trauj clans typically contain and destroy them locally. I could not help but wonder aloud, "*Who were these giants to hate so completely that their rage continues on after death*?" Rezkakou had no answer for my question. Nor did he share why the Yahtahmi worry about the sudden surge in Alkitar among the clans, or what that may bode for the Zaharets.

As the sun rose and dawn broke, we left our bodies behind to let our spirits wander the Dream Road for a time. I say nothing of the terrors and wonders I saw there, for Rezkakou swore me to secrecy. Still, I will impart a truth that needs to be shared. We of the west and the Zaharets owe a silent debt to these Trauj of the Luasa Sands, who in many unseen ways guard our cities and peoples from the threats of the world's waste places.

NEW RITES

YAHTAHMI

Lannua Binds the First Dream

When the Trauj returned to their homelands, they found a dry and deserted place inhabited by foul spirits. Lannua, the Yahtahmi of Ashan Haluzanrab, discovered ways to bind such spirits in the dreams and stories of the Luasa Sands. With a story and a dream, she bound the rathic Haza-ajas, and sanctified the Ashan lands. The Trauj remember her to this day.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">LANNUA BINDS THE FIRST DREAM</th></tr>
<tr><td>Location to learn:</td><td colspan="3">The Ashan Haluzanrab in the Luasa Desert</td></tr>
<tr><td>Devotion Points:</td><td>12 + 2r</td><td>Clash Point Cost:</td><td>4</td></tr>
<tr><td>Tradition:</td><td>Yahtahmi (Light)</td><td>Range:</td><td>Line of sight</td></tr>
<tr><td>Duration:</td><td colspan="3">Two generations (80 years), unless the dream is shattered</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Effect</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Rathic cannot be slain, only banished back to the Silent Lands. It takes these demons time to find their way back to the world, but when they do, they hunt down those who banished them. Remembering Lannua allows a Yahtahmi to bind a defeated rathic (one whose Wounds are reduced to 0) in a tale and a dream, preventing it from returning for the duration of the rite.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Critical success:</td><td colspan="3">The duration of the rite is permanent (unless shattered); any attempt to find the dream now have a hard difficulty.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Defence:</td><td>Willpower</td><td>Save effect:</td><td>The duration of the rite is halved. In the case of a critical on the invocation, the duration is still permanent, but the rathic can reach out from the prison. The difficulty to discover the dream is now difficult (or normal with a critical on the Willpower check).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Advancements</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Dreamthief: the Yahtahmi may call upon a rathic they bind using this rite. They can now invoke the rite as a Shadow Rite with an instant duration, a Devotion Point cost of 4 and an additional cost of 1d3 – 1 Corruption. When invoked, the Yahtahmi may use the rathic's attack profile to make one attack against a valid target within line of sight. If the Yahtahmi calls upon this rathic more than four times in a year, it breaks free from its prison and hunts down the Yahtahmi.
Beyond Spirits: the Yahtahmi may now use this rite against the Dead.</td></tr>
</table>

Rezsem Opens the Doors of Hatred

When the Trauj emerged from the Flood of Darkness, they were scared, weak, and vulnerable. Still, the beasts of the Serpent's Standard hunted them, for the giants were gone from the world. Rezsem fled a rathic dream kingdom, sought out the giants in the depths of the Luasa Sands, and returned with the promise of hatred – the promise of the gift of the giants' blessing. The next day, when the dream spirits attempted to punish their Trauj slaves, Rezsem flew into a savage rage and slew the rathic's bestial servants. His rage was so great, the clans had to slay Rezsem to save themselves. The Trauj learned of the strength and danger of the blood of the giants in this way, but did not understand the fate and power of those who would take the name Alkitar until Ilou. The Trauj remember Rezsem to this day.

REZSEM OPENS THE DOORS OF HATRED			
Location to learn:	Any clan in the Luasa Desert		
Devotion Points:	4 per target	Clash Point Cost:	All
Tradition:	Yahtahmi (Light)	Range:	Touch
Duration:	Sustained: 1-minute interval		
Effect			
The Yahtahmi can inspire hatred for the beasts of the Serpent's Standard among their allies by remembering Rezsem. All those under the effects of this rite gain +1 Clash Point and +1d4 damage when fighting the Takan.			
Critical success:	This rite is sustained for an additional interval at no cost.		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None
Advancements			
Calming Tales: the Yahtahmi's presence and tales can soothe the giants' rage. All Alkitar within line of sight of a Yahtahmi with this advancement gain the trait 'Hearer of Deeds of Glory', which applies to all checks to end their Alkitar rites. *The Tale Grows:* the Yahtahmi may now invoke this rite in the presence of rathic, the Dead, and Skessh.			

Takahala Binds the First Clan

When the Trauj emerged from under the Serpent's Standard, they were formless and had no purpose. They followed the giants west, only to be left alone in the harsh sands of the Luasa. Squabbling broke out, and the Trauj turned on each other. Takahala emerged from the chaos and brought order to the Trauj. She gave them laws, divided the people into clans, and became the first chieftainess of the Ashan Mudi. The Trauj still thrive by her code and remember her to this day.

TAKAHALA BINDS THE FIRST CLAN			
Location to learn:	Any clan in the Luasa Desert		
Devotion Points:	2 per target	Clash Point Cost:	3
Tradition:	Yahtahmi (Light)	Range:	Earshot
Duration:	1 hour		
Effect			
When the Yahtahmi remembers Takahala, the targets receive a bonus to Influence, Lore, Culture (Own), and Culture (Other) equal to the Yahtahmi's Devotion.			
Critical success:	The skill bonuses are doubled		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None
Advancements			
The Raiment of Chiefs: if the targets are Trauj who fight with a whip, bow, or myrah, the above bonus also applies to Combat skills. *The Penalty of the Law:* while under the effects of this rite, targets deal +1d4 damage against enemies with 10+ Corruption.			

Fuenten the IV

Though the world forgets him, his lordships, and his follies, we remember Fuenten, king of the giants. It was he who raised the waves to flood the East and clean the people. He raised a shining spear and shield against the thorn in the flesh of the world, only to be sacrificed on the altar of pride. While we mourn his passing, his deeds enable us to stand tall in the face of evil. The Trauj remember him as king to this day.

FUENTEN THE IV			
Location to learn:	Any clan in the Luasa Desert		
Devotion Points:	2 per target	Clash Point Cost:	3
Tradition:	Yahtahmi (Light)	Range:	Earshot
Duration:	Sustained; 1-round interval		
Effect			
When the Yahtahmi remembers Fuenten, she infuses her pack with the greatness of the kings of old, who spurred their allies to potent heights. All the Yahtahmi's allies gain +4 Mettle and +12 Valour (this temporary Valour goes away when the rite ends, whether it is used or not). However, Fuenten's folly plagues the Yahtahmi, as well. She suffers 1d4 Vitality damage for each round in which this rite is invoked. Should her Vitality reach 0, the Yahtahmi passes out for 1 hour and loses 2d4 Mettle (recovered normally) and her Vitality is restored.			
Critical success:	The Yahtahmi instead suffers 1d6 Vitality each minute		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None
Advancements			
Shining of the Silver Folk: while this rite is invoked, all targets gain +2 damage and +1 Protection, as their weapons and armour shine with the glory of ancient days. *The Depths of Folly:* the Yahtahmi can increase the Mettle bonus to +8 (+24 Valour), but they immediately drop to 0 Valour.			

ALKITAR

Relentless Pursuit

The Alkitar can call upon their blood to infuse them with great endurance, allowing them to run for days and nights in pursuit of their foes. The tales of their relentless pursuits inspire the Yahtahmi and strike fear into the hearts of the Takan.

RELENTLESS PURSUIT			
Location to learn:	Nowhere; the giants choose their own		
Devotion Points:	5	Clash Point Cost:	–
Tradition:	Alkitar (Shadow)	Range:	Self
Duration:	Continues until the player performs a successful Endurance check at the end of a Survival check for travel; the rite then ceases at the end of the following travel check.		
Effect			
The Alkitar travels at an accelerated rate. They cover twice as much ground each day of travel (provoking one Survival check for every four days of Travel). They do not need to eat, drink, or sleep while this right is invoked, and all attempts to hide a quarry's trail (whether Stealth, Endurance, or Survival) are at a difficult difficulty. When the rite ends, the Alkitar suffers 1d6 Wounds (ignoring Protection) per Survival check made (so, if the journey or pursuit lasted for 8 days, they would suffer 2d6 Wounds).			
Critical success:	The damage is 1d4 Wounds per Survival check and obscuring the trail is now a hard difficulty.		
Defence:	Endurance	Save effect:	The rite lasts for one more check, then it ends
Advancements			
A Pursuit of Glory: the Alkitar may now grant their legendary endurance to those around them, inspiring others to great deeds. This rite now affects all friendly targets within 15 yards. *Fear of the Pursued:* the Alkitar's presence now instills fear in the Takan he hunts. When an Alkitar under the influence of this rite encounters Takan, they provoke a difficult Defence check from each type of Takan (hard on a critical). On a failure, fear grips the Takan and all who failed take 2d10 + Damage Bonus in Wounds (ignoring Protection) before the battle begins.			

Soul of Giants

The Alkitar stand indefatigable in the face of overwhelming odds and monstrosities that turn other Jackals' knees to water. The giants' souls do not abide weakness, fear, or hesitation. This rite calls upon that stolid nature and prevents the Alkitar from feeling fear.

SOUL OF GIANTS			
Location to learn:	Nowhere; the giants choose their own		
Devotion Points:	4	Clash Point Cost:	2
Tradition:	Alkitar (Shadow)	Range:	Self
Duration:	Continues until the player performs a successful Willpower check at the end of their turn; the rite then ceases at the end of the following turn.		
Effect			
The Alkitar gains +2 Protection versus fear effects that sap Valour, including abilities such as the Dead's Chill of Death or a Mavakan's Howling Fury. While this rite is invoked, the Alkitar may not leave the battle, and enemies with Valour-sapping abilities will prioritise the Alkitar as their primary target.			
Critical success:	This right now grants +4 Protection versus the above effects		
Defence:	Willpower	Save effect:	The rite lasts one more round, then it ends
Advancements			
Hate Above Fear: the Alkitar may now apply their Protection Bonus to nearby allies by raising the invocation cost by 2 per target beyond themselves. If they invoke this rite in this way, they suffer 1d4 Wounds per target that gains the benefit of this rite, as the battle madness claims their flesh. All targets suffer the same bonuses and penalties as the Alkitar while under this rite's influence. *Beware a Giant Roused to Anger:* the Alkitar can make a free (does not need to spend the Clash Point) power attack against foes when their fear ability damages the Alkitar's Valour, despite the increased Protection. The Alkitar may also use other Clash Point-based abilities on their turn in addition to this free power attack.			

A Consuming Hatred

The giants' passion inflames and consumes the Alkitar. There are times when it roils out of them in waves of hatred that consume everyone around them, including themselves. In such moments, all within arm's reach of the Alkitar risk their lives.

A CONSUMING HATRED			
Location to learn:	Nowhere; the giants choose their own		
Devotion Points:	5	Clash Point Cost:	3
Tradition:	Alkitar (Shadow)	Range:	Self
Duration:	Continues until the player performs a successful Willpower check at the end of their turn; the rite then ceases at the end of the following turn.		
Effect			
The Alkitar inflicts their Damage Bonus to all engaged characters (including themselves) at the start of their turn. This damage ignores Protection, and targets may not spend Clash Points to react to this damage, as it is not an attack.			
Critical success:	The Damage Bonus is reduced by 1 step on the Damage Bonus chart when applied to the Alkitar or their allies.		
Defence:	Willpower	Save effect:	The rite lasts for one more round; then it ends

Advancements
Return the Serpent's Strike: the Alkitar gains a free power attack that applies to clashes against foes who try to leave engagement with them. This is an exception to the rule that Improved actions may not be taken during a Clash reaction.
Fight Me!: the Alkitar may make a free Challenge against one engaged target at the start of each round.

Thews of Old

The Alkitar tell tales of the mighty weapons of bronze, iron, silver, and light the giants of old brought to bear against the kingdom of Mouadah. Though the Trauj are now less than they once were, there are moments when they can emulate the deeds of the giants of old, and the beasts of the world tremble in fear.

THEWS OF OLD			
Location to learn:	Nowhere; the giants choose their own		
Devotion Points:	5	Clash Point Cost:	4
Tradition:	Alkitar (Shadow)	Range:	Self
Duration:	Continues until the player performs a successful Endurance check at the end of their turn; the rite then ceases at the end of the following turn.		
Effect			
Increase the damage done by the Alkitar's weapons by one category (1d8 weapons become 1d10; 1d10 weapons become 2d6; 2d6 become 2d8, and 2d8 become 2d10). While this rite is invoked, all Clash rolls the Alkitar makes to defend are at a hard difficulty, as they are focused on attacking instead of defending.			
Critical success:	Clash defence rolls are difficult instead of hard		
Defence:	Endurance	Save effect:	The rite lasts one more round; then it ends
Advancements			
Dervish of the Desert: the Alkitar may also use the two-weapon fighting style with Heavy 1H weapons.			
Stringing the Impossible Bow: this rite's effects now apply to ranged weapons, as well.			

EQUIPMENT

One does not find many crafters among the Trauj, less due to their lack of skill and more due to the lack of raw materials in the Luasa Sands. One traveller said much of what we think of as 'Trauj' equipment comes from knowledge the Yahtahmi preserved, which the clan members now apply, seemingly by rote. However, one cannot see the bows of seven fountains and believe this story. It is this chronicler's opinion that the Trauj hide more at Anahaluf than they would like any to know.

BOW OF SEVEN FOUNTAINS

Rarely for sale; if so, they typically go for 450+ ss

These bows are carried by clan chiefs and their retinues. Crafted from the Shamballa trees of Anahaluf, combined with resins from several desert plants, and glued together with horse blood thickened with unknown reagents, these bows are the pinnacle of the Trauj crafters. Capped with silver and inlaid with the stories of their ancestors, these kingly bows are terrifyingly rapid weapons of death in the hands of the Trauj horsemen.

Effect: this counts as a Trauj Bow. When a Trauj uses this weapon, they may apply a Damage Bonus to their ranged attacks, using their Wisdom in place of their Strength on the Damage Bonus chart.

MYRAH

200 ss

The typical weapon for a mounted Trauj warrior, the *myrah* is like a Melkoni javelin or lance – a variation on the spears used throughout the Zaharets. Weighted differently – for someone fighting from horseback – and far slimmer than a spear, the *myrah* is sheathed in bronze one quarter of the way down its length. When driven down from the height of a rider on horseback, or with the power of a charging mount behind it, the damage inflicted is grievous.

Effect: the *myrah* counts as a Heavy 1H weapon, usable only from horseback. However, the Trauj may double their Damage Bonus while mounted and using this weapon.

WHIP

50 ss

Another weapon of the Trauj chieftains, this is nothing more than a simple braided horse-leather thong... or so I thought, until I saw it flay the flesh off a man's face with a flick of the chief's wrist. A simple yet brutally effective weapon, much like the scepters and maces in other cultures, the whip is a symbol of rulership among the Trauj. Stories say the Trauj learned about its use and effectiveness while under the lash of Mouadah, and they appropriated the weapon as a symbol of rulership after their freedom.

Effect: the whip is a Light 1H weapon. The Trauj may apply a Damage Bonus to melee attacks with this weapon, using their Deftness in place of their Strength on the Damage Bonus chart.

HALUZANRAB SEEDS

200 ss per dose of dried seeds

The seeds of the haluzanrab plant have a potent psychedelic effect on any who ingest them. The Trauj use them in their tattoos, during coming-of-age rituals, and primarily for the rites of the Yahtahmi.

Effect: the Yahtahmi use the *haluzanrab* seeds to help them bind dreams, journey along the Dream Road, and tell their tales. If eaten raw, without a Yahtahmi's preparations – a hard Culture (Own) test – they can be toxic. The person in question must succeed at a difficult Endurance and Willpower test. The Endurance test is made against an intensity 7 poison with a cycle of Soon (*Jackals* pages 159–161). If the target fails the Willpower test, they suffer from horrific nightmares, as rathic in the area are drawn to them, and gain 2d6 Corruption from the experience.

MAVOK

Trauj Jackals, indeed many of their people, seek glory to guide them to their ancestors after death. The rarest join the rank of the Yahtah, those who guide the clans and are remembered forever in the tales of the Yahtahmi. After participating in a combat where they slay a creature that possesses 3+ Clash Points, a Trauj may spend a Fate Point to bind the *mavok* of this deed to their story. The Trauj in question must have played a significant part in the slaying of the beast (at the Loremaster's discretion). When using this ability, the Trauj should make a Culture (Own) test. On a success, the glory of the deed is bound to them. They gain +5% to their Culture (Own) and to one other skill of their choice for the rest of the season, as the pride from such a deed fills them and other Trauj can sense the glory about them. At the end of the season, the Trauj may take the Inscribe Glory seasonal action (see below) to gain permanent benefits from their use of this Fate Point.

At their discretion, a Loremaster can offer the Trauj an opportunity to gain *mavok* for a particularly glorious achievement outside of combat, such as sneaking into the house of an anaxi, preventing an assassination, negotiating a peace treaty, or joining the Thirty/*Ish Bahur*, etc.

CLAN VIRTUES

A player may choose any of these Clan Virtues in lieu of the Cultural Virtues *An Ancient Hate*, *Hearer of Old Tales*, or *Seeker of Glory* when playing a Trauj from one of the following clans.

ASHAN MUDI (ARROW CLAN)

Members of the *Ashan Mudi* (page 80) are known for their unflinching fidelity and outlook. Members of this clan can call upon this Virtue to stand strong in the face of mental or social influence, when dealing with the old laws and history, or when fighting those of the East.

ASHAN HALUZANRAB (DREAM FLOWER CLAN)

Members of the *Ashan Haluzanrab* (page 80) dwell in the oldest ruins of the A'hule Asa. As such, they often possess secret or hidden knowledge due to their connection with the past, their relationship with the Anzaim, and their spirit quests. Members of this clan can call upon this Virtue when attempting to understand the way the world used to work, when confronted with something monstrous or ancient, or when dealing with supernatural forces in the world.

ASHAN TASANIZANRAB (BLOOMING FLOWER CLAN)

Members of the *Ashan Tasanizanrab* (page 81) travel the Zaharets, even more so than other tribes, to find glory in war! They sell their blades and skills to the highest bidders – not because they are bloodthirsty, but because it opens doors to faraway lands. They share the stories of their journeys with the clan, spreading the knowledge of exotic locations and peoples. Members of this clan can call upon this Virtue while fighting, travelling, or sharing tales.

ASHAN TSUNAZKAN (WELL-DWELLER CLAN)

Members of the *Ashan Tsunazkan* (page 81) are known as the sacred keepers of clan peace in the Luasa Sands. Members of this clan can call upon this Virtue when dealing with matters of law or custom, resolving disputes peacefully, or generally acting as peacemakers.

SEASONAL ACTIONS

INSCRIBE GLORY

When a Trauj Jackal spends a Fate Point to gain *mavok* (see above) during a season, they gain access to the 'Inscribe Glory' seasonal action (for that season only). The Trauj may take this action to inscribe the glory of their feats into their skin, creating a record of their deeds. To do so, they must spend 250 ss per point of *mavok* they wish to inscribe to purchase the necessary inks and *haluzanrab* for a tattoo. The player must describe the tattoo their Jackal receives. After they spend the shekels, they receive several benefits. First, they increase their *kleos* by 1d6 (+1 per glory). Second, they increase their Fate Point maximum by one for every five glory they gain, as their ancestors begin to take notice of them. Finally, should the Trauj accumulate 20 glory in this way, they are guaranteed a place among the Yahtah. When they die – assuming they die in a lawful and glorious way – the Yahtahmi immortalise the Trauj in song. The Loremaster should work with the player to create a rite that grants bonuses to the Yahtahmi and targets that is in line with the Trauj's life and story.

JOURNEY ALONG THE DREAM ROAD

This intense ritual requires the Trauj and their pack to all spend time on it. If a pack decides they wish to Journey along the Dream Road, they must all take this seasonal action, with the Trauj taking the lead. Additionally, the group needs to purchase haluzanrab seeds for the whole pack, as well as ritual implements – incense, sacrifices of goats and bulls, strong wine, and wood for a bonfire to consume them all (500 ss per Jackal). At the end of the ritual, the Trauj leader must make a hard Culture (Own) test – other Jackals may help with their Culture (Own) or Culture (Other), where appropriate. If successful, the Trauj opens a path to the Dream Road for their pack. They choose one of the following:

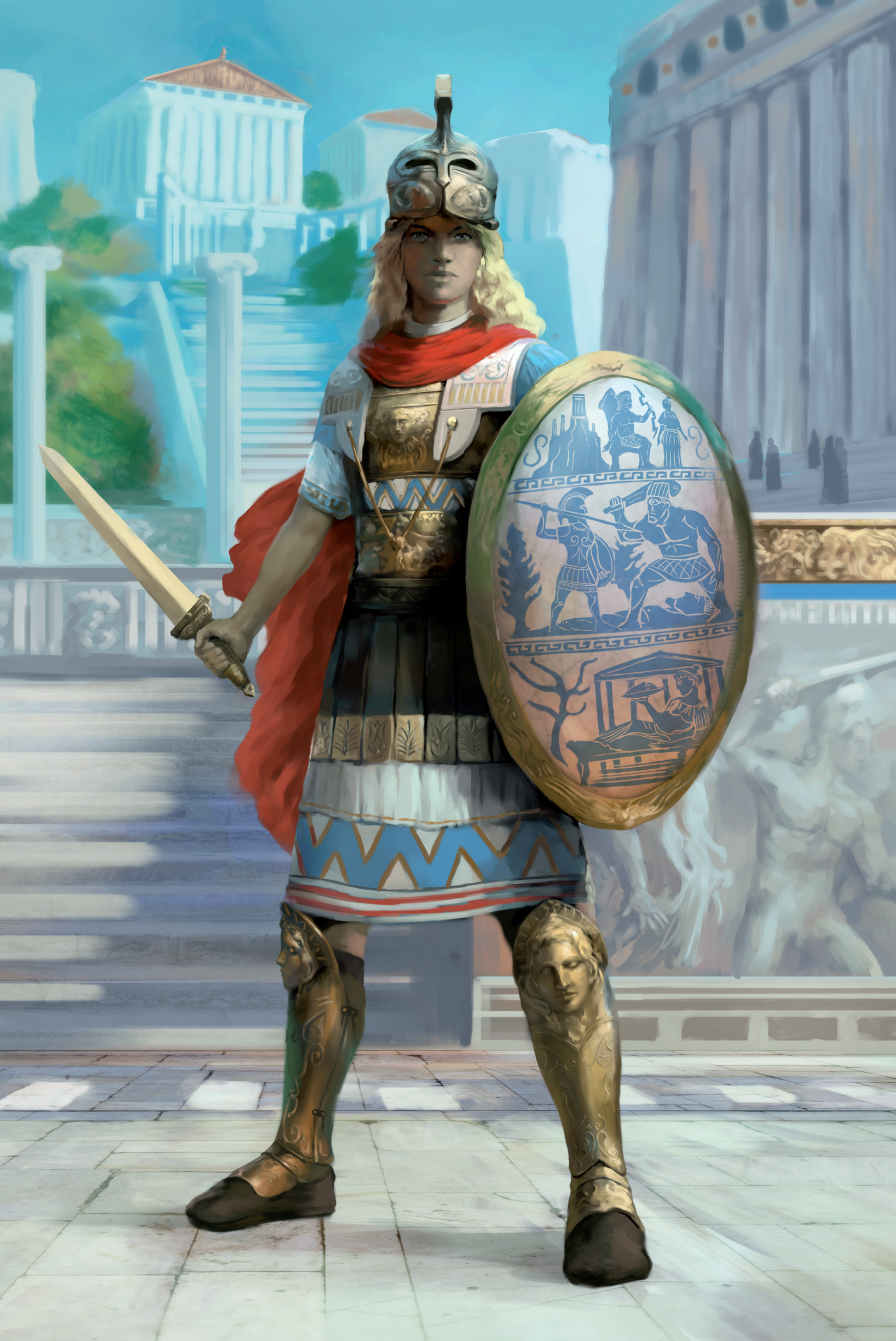
Travel: the pack may, using the Dream Road, travel to a distant location. Like the Hannic moon roads, this journey is quick, but not easy. Each member of the pack must make a Willpower test. Those who succeed appear within 1d10 yards of the Trauj leader. Those who fail appear 1d4 miles from the leader, and any fumble means, in addition to the failure consequences, the pack is attacked by 1d6 rathic while on the Dream Road. This journey takes 1d20 days to complete but does not require travel checks and seems to take only several hours to the travellers.

Communion: the pack may seek out the knowledge of the Ancestors. This is like the Research action, but with the scope of time and information expanded to include the history of the Trauj. Any attempt to discover information prior to the Liberation (see page 90) is at an extreme difficulty. This also a way for Alkitar and Yahtahmi in the pack to gain new rites or talk to fallen Jackals.

Access a Prison: much like the Communion choice above, but instead the Jackals interact with a rathic bound in a dream prison. The Jackals should not trust the spirit within the prison, as it will seek to use the pack to free itself. Still, it can be a source of potent and dread information, though dealing with such a spirit provokes difficult or even hard Willpower checks to resist gaining 1d6 Corruption.

If the Trauj leading this seasonal ritual is not a Yahtahmi, increase the difficulty of all checks by one step (from normal to difficult or from difficult to hard, etc.).

And thus, my time with the Trauj ended. I received several suggestions for caravans heading west, and I found myself on the road to Kroryla – my last stop during my survey of the peoples and cultures of the Zaharets before I return to my beloved Escanoi in blessed Melkon.



CHAPTER 5

BOOK 4 – OF THE MELKONI AND THE COLONIES

Weep, goddess. Weep and sing of the fall of the titans from the heights of creation to the depths of the abyss. Weep and sing the rage of Kronis' son Araton – murderer, savior, and high king of the Pantheon of Vonokental – who slew his father and cast down the fallen giants and titans, sending them across the river Ikkora, trading greatness for freedom on behalf of the world.

~Opening lines of the *Gigamachiad*~

While familiar, I cannot unburden myself from the feeling that something is wrong in Kroryla. The city feels like the cities of blessed Melkon in the west, yet somehow changed. It is as if a painter painted a picture of a Melkoni city from another's description. It is nearly perfect, yet so far from it one could not mistake one for the other.

~Akraiatos of Escanoi, *Travellers on the War Road, Book 4 –*
Of the Melkoni and the Colonies~

THE MELKONI – COLONISTS FROM THE WEST AND INHERITORS OF PHILOSOPHY

Over the next few weeks, the heat and parching sun of the Luasa Sands gave way to the broad plains of Adaanshummar to the south and the gray, lifeless wastes of Vori to the north. After a brief stop in Orsem Yahan, where the good caravan master sold the bounty we brought from the Trauj clans, we journeyed west. We passed the familiar silhouette of Ameena Noani and approached the walled city of Kroryla, easternmost of the Melkoni colonies. Many unfamiliar and unobservant travellers would only see the wounded and the refugees in the shadow of the city's walls. I see the scars of the wars in the west, which have raged for ten years. I see people from Mykinos, Escanoi, and Pythos, whose distinct features are as clear to me as the differences between an Amar and Omri are to a Luathi Hasheer. I see the lost and the terrified. This colony bears the scars and wounds of our folly and yet mixes them with hope, which seems to redeem the wounds with the promise of a new life and a new tomorrow here in the east. As I rode into Kroryla in the month of Eser in the 22nd year of the reign of *anaxi* Glykera, some seven years since I began to compile my works, I felt as though I were coming home. A home purchased by another and rearranged to their taste, but home nonetheless.

Crossing the agora, I paused to take in the glory of the temples to the Pantheon. Too long have I gone without seeing the gods of blessed Melkon; too long has it been since I walked among my people and heard our tongue spoken. The sounds thrilled my heart and were like honey in my ears. Kalisto, high priestess of the local Lykosian cult, greeted me on the steps of the temple to Araton. My reputation preceded me and as we discussed my great work, it became clear that if I wished to speak of the Melkoni colonies in the Zaharets for my patrons back in Escanoi, there would be no better insight into the eastern Melkoni mind and life than that of the high priestess of the local hero cult. So, Kalisto brought me into the temple of Lykos, where I resided while composing this book.

Of the four great cultures of the Zaharets, when one looks at the Melkoni of the region it is hard not to feel we are the outsiders in this land. We have but one major stronghold in the region, with no kingdom or even a city-state to claim as our own. While more of my people enter from the west, creating a need to found Lykroa, we have still only entered the border marches of the Zaharets. Kalisto spoke of Glykera's long-term goals: claim the northeastern region of the Zaharets – from the Valley of Troikos in the west to the Vori Vana in the east – and establish a more fortified presence in the region. She hopes to expand Kroryla's reach and influence until it is recognised as the great eastern city-state, much like Mykinos, Sepharakati, Krarata, or even my own Escanoi. However, to do so, Kroryla must not only grow, but its colonies – such as the newly established Lykroa – must thrive. The way Kalisto talks, it seems Glykera seeks to make Kroryla a power in the Zaharets and the gateway for all east-west trade. It is a bold undertaking, and only time will tell whether Glykera can thread ambition's gate and whether Kroryla can survive her *anaxi's* plans.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MELKONI

Life in the colonies is harsher than it is in the cities of blessed Melkon. These Melkoni must wrestle each day from the land and take it from the beasts of the region. As such, the Melkoni of the colonies live with more, and yet less, than those in my home of Escanoi. Each day, the Melkoni of Kroryla wake before dawn to prepare a morning meal – typically bread dipped in wine, with figs and olives. The family eats this together, before exiting the home with the first light of dawn. Many go out to provide for and support the city. Guards, crafters, and merchants move throughout the city, while philosophers and priests call from street corners. While they are not of the same quality as the schools of Escanoi, the philosophical discourse in Kroryla is much livelier; I enjoyed their less refined – but still insightful – debate. Many of the city's farms and herd lands lie within sight of the walls. The Melkoni here must till, tend, and defend the land from beasts – both the four-legged and two-legged varieties. They also prepare herds and harvest to take into the city, where they are used, traded, or packed to be sent west to Mykinos by caravan. Those who stay within the home tend to the household needs, such as visiting merchant stalls for the daily needs of the home; instructing the younger children; and heading to the temple for daily prayers, needed sacrifices, or to seek the wisdom of the gods. In the evening, families return to their homes to share a second meal of the day – typically figs and dates from the fields, spiced lamb or boar, and barley. They serve wine with every meal of the day, but the meals and the wine grow more extravagant when hosting guests and during holy days.

XENIA

Xenia, the laws of civility and hospitality Araton established at the beginning of his stewardship, are among the most sacred of all Melkoni customs. A house guest, especially a *xenos* or outsider/non-Melkoni, is sacrosanct in the eyes of the Pantheon. Any kind of mistreatment of a guest is a crime in the eyes of Araton and punishable by the worst torments in Hakides. Many of our tales outline the curses and grief that fall upon those who break the custom of *xenia*, from metamorphosis into wolves, to the death of ones' children – so the perpetrator is never remembered – to the harshest of punishments in the abyss. Additional tales remind us of those who hosted Araton in disguise and were blessed for their generosity and faithfulness. Even the poorest of families in blessed Melkon and Kroryla will open their home to provide *xenia* to those who need it. The counter is those protected by the laws of *xenia* agree to treat the host's home and family as their own, under fear of Araton's curses. The greatest Melkoni tragedies deal with the fallout from the actions of those on both sides who violated *xenia*.

HOLY FESTIVALS

These are the festivals and traditions of my people. Long have I missed the running of the races of the *Vonopekos*, or the revelations of Pythen. These events are weeklong celebrations in Escanoi, but they are by necessity cut short here in the colony of the Land of Risings. However, they do still celebrate, and it brings me great joy to know that all Melkoni join in these events. Kalisto spoke of how this very year, the *Vonopekos* was established in Kroryla. Glykera plans to send runners to Adaanshummar, the Trauj Ashans, and Ger to offer their champions a place in the games. While this may seem like a sacrilege before the Pantheon, Kalisto assured me the high priests could find no such prohibition. Further, Kalisto spoke of Lykos' involvement in the Zaharets, and how he continues to guide those who follow him to embrace all the peoples of the Zaharets, as though they were lost cousins. When I pressed her, Kalisto grew quiet, as if listening to whispers beyond my perception; she assured me that if the peoples of the Zaharets are not drawn together, they will fall separately. She refused to expound on this to a non-Lykosian, despite my assurance I would request aid for any such troubles. It should be noted, much like the Trauj, we of blessed Melkon use the old calendar to keep times and seasons.

VONOPEKOS

Tasfoseba or Zadon's Week

During the last week of the year, the Melkoni hold a great contest to pit the best wrestlers, archers, runners, and swimmers against each other. It is a time of celebration for the bounty and blessings of the previous year, and a defiant stand against all that may come in the new year. This celebration is in sharp contrast to the fear this time holds for the other cultures of the Zaharets. During this time, we remember Araton's deeds and struggles during the *Gigamachiad*, where he and the rest of the Pantheon overthrew the cthonic powers, bound them away beyond the Ikkora, and began the stewardship of creation. The winners of the *Vonopekos* receive the traditional laurel crown, and their city's support – which includes housing, food, and a stipend – until the end of the next year's games.

URTASIS PYTHEN

1st Udaketa of Senon or Dark day of Erbe

This festival celebrates the revelations of Pythen, and the establishment of the oracle of Pythen. It is celebrated throughout Melkon because all Melkoni enjoy the blessing of Pythen's oracle, who has saved blessed Melkon from famine, war, or disaster many times. This festival has become less popular in the last decade due to the war in the west. However, one needs only study the scrolls to understand those who incited the war ignored the oracle's warnings. One cannot inquire of the Pantheon and ignore their advice without disaster dogging their heels.

URTASIS ARETAI

1st Udsar of Arekon – 2nd Udsar of Arekon or Chief Day of Sina

This festival celebrates the Pantheon's victory over the forces of the giants and the cthonic gods, the establishment of Melkon's law, and the raising of Vonokental. It is when blessed Melkon remembers the day the Pantheon took up the stewardship of creation. This weeklong celebration is marked with meals at every temple on the mounts, sacrifices to each of the Pantheon members and local cults, as well as recitations by the poets of the *Gigamachiad*. Along with the *Vonopekos*, these are the annual traditions that bind all Melkoni to each other, reminding us of our roots and our shared culture. Even Mykinos and Sepharakati, with their decades-long hatred of each other, still rest from battle during this week.

URTASIS LYKOZOA

1st Udsar of Heruson or Chief Day of Sebe

This festival is local to the east and the colony of Kroryla. It remembers the apotheosis of Lykos and his seven great deeds. During this time, the locals hunt snakes that were captured and released in the Gardens of the Daughters; warriors of Lykos and Rylareria stand watch to ensure the snakes do not get out of hand. The people then gather the snake heads, bind them with salt, cedar, and juniper berries, and burn them before the altar of Ryla in defiance of the Daughters of Ceenon and the cthonic powers. The Lykosians and the Rylareria also hold contests of skill during this time. It is traditionally the day when new acolytes are accepted into both temples.

URTASIS KORAATHANA

3rd Udoura – 3rd Udaketa of Arekon or Oura Day – Dark Day of Sina

This festival remembers the return of Koraa from Hakides, when her mother journeyed into the underworld to win her daughter's freedom. During this time, all Melkoni celebrate with raucous songs, great consumption of the new wine, and sacrifices to all the Pantheon. Koraa's return marks the transition to the dry season from the deluge of the rainy season. Here, we give thanks for the stewardship of the Pantheon and for the gifts of law and safety we enjoy in our homes and lives.

URTASIS KORAAZOA

3rd Udoura – 3rd Udaketa of Heruson or Oura Day – Dark Day of Sebe

This festival remembers Koraa's descent into Hakides when Hakides tricked her into returning forever to his realm. Here, as the summer sun blazes its hottest, we offer Koraa our support in the forms of food and libation to sustain her until she returns to bring the rains needed for planting and harvest. During the days of celebration, we Melkoni dress in somber clothes, cover ourselves with ashes to remind us of Koraa's death, and wail and mourn to beg Hakides to release Koraa. At night, under the shelter of darkness when we are hidden from Hakides, we gather round the house fires, offer remembrance of our ancestors' *kleos*, and remember those who were taken into Hakides' realm.

MEKINOK, HATSAA, AND UDALWAN

See page 21

We Melkoni celebrate these festivals also, in ways nearly identical to the Luathi.

THE MELKONI OF THE ZAHARETS

As I sat with Kalisto, we reminisced about the west and the great cities of blessed Melkon. Kalisto's thoughts turned to those of Kroryla, and the people who came to live here. As we discussed these Melkoni – those who inhabit the city, the colony, and the Lands of Rising – over wine and roasted boar, we determined there are three major groupings of Melkoni here in the Zaharets: the western refugees, the colonists, and the citizens of Kroryla.

WESTERN REFUGEES

Many of our people flee the great war in the west and turn their face away from blessed Melkon. Displaced by fighting and loss, some find hope in the colonies. However, for others, the northern colonies along the border with Cynaia, are too close to the fighting. So, they are drawn in to the east and the Land of Risings. Many Melkoni here in Kroryla and in the Luathi city of Mikro bear the scars of the war to the west. For them, the Land of Risings is a chance for them to start over and find safety and shelter, while still clinging to their roots. Kalisto, the other priests of the Pantheon, and Glykera all seek to provide shelter for these Melkoni in the city, as well as the stability of tradition to begin their healing.

MELKONI COLONISTS

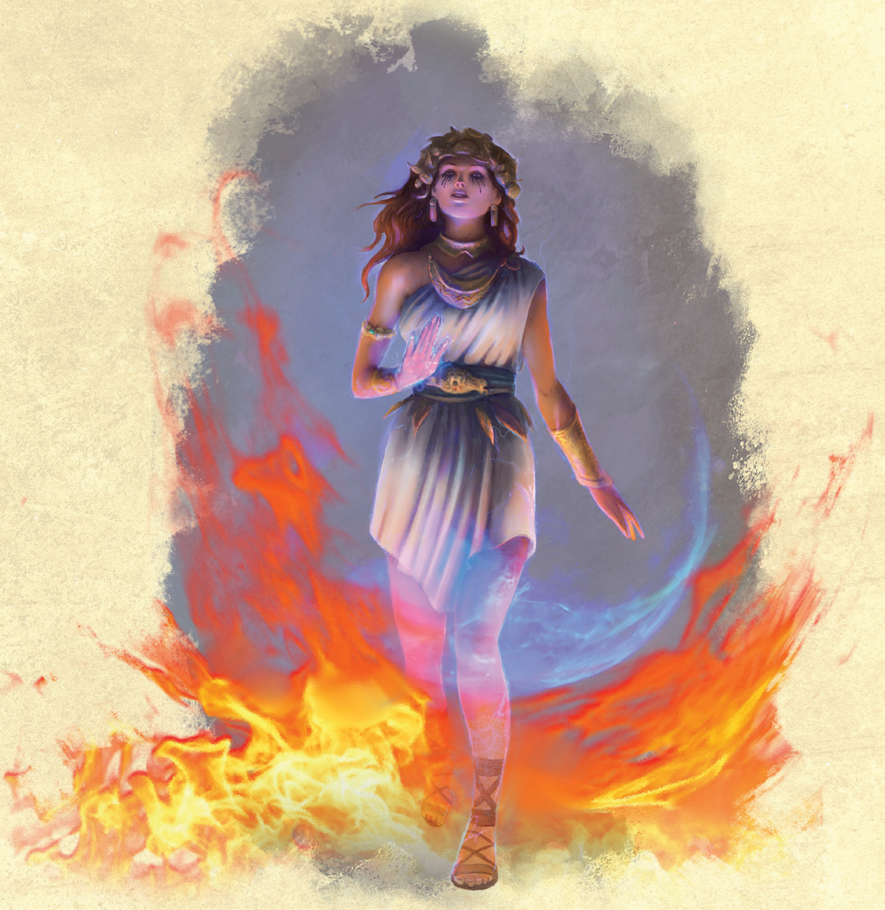
There are those who journey east not out of fear or pain, but from a sense of wonder, a desire for trade and better fortunes for them and their children, or simply because the city is there. I sympathise with this desire to discover what lies over the horizon. It has long been the practice of blessed Melkon to start colonies when cities become overpopulated, sending out rabble-rousers, malcontents, and those they can no longer support to establish new cities. These client colonies stimulate the growth of both cities, by sending their parent cities raw materials and importing finished goods from them. There are those in the east who embody this sense of expansion, wonder, and hard living. They are drawn to Kroryla, and now Lykroa, to see blessed Melkon's land grow and to claim a bit of these new lands for themselves.

CITIZENS OF KRORYLA

Melkoni who hail from Kroryla are typically true born to the Land of Risings. They hold no memory of the west, save for the stories from refugees and their parents. They feel Kroryla deserves its own chance to establish itself, instead of being constantly seen as a 'colony.' Kroryla has officially started their own colony in Lykroa, which supports their desire for independence. They rail against the shipments they are forced to send back to the west each season, but they forget the trade and support that flow into the city from the east. While the wars in the west draw the eyes of the city-states away from the east, the citizens of Kroryla would do well to look to the past. The cities of blessed Melkon do not look kindly on those colonies that seek to slip free of their control.

MELKONI JACKALS

As I sat with Kalisto, listening to the tales of the Cult of Ceenon's resurgence here in the east (see *The Cult of Ceenon* adventure, available free from Osprey Games), and how she and the city were saved from those who would renew the lives of the Daughters of Ceenon, my thoughts again returned to Jackals. Is there a more constant symbol of the Zaharets than the Jackal… loved and reviled in equal measure for the war they wage? It is clear to me why one of blessed Melkon would take up the path of the Jackal along the War Road. We are a people governed by great passions, which often lead to problems for society if left unchecked. In my city of Escanoi, the *Vonopekos* (games of competition in honour of the Pantheon) offer one such outlet, as does the decade-long war. But for those Melkoni who possess a lion's share of the gods-given passions, the lure of the War Road calls out to their souls. Kalisto also believes there are several reasons for this call: defence, exploration, and inspiration.



DEFENCE

One of the most common reasons for a Melkoni to leave the walls of Kroryla and head into the wilds of the Zaharets is to defend the city. In blessed Melkon, where the threats of chaos were pulled root and stem from the plains and cities by the great heroes of the Pantheon, we no longer need those outside the walls to protect us. But here in the Zaharets, where Takan breed in the wilds, hunt caravans, and raze towns, that need remains strong; it hearkens back to an earlier time, immortalised in the epic poems and tales of blessed Melkon. In the west, kleos is found only on the battlefield, but here in the east, one can still find *kleos* by standing against the rising tide of chaos and protecting the bastions of law like Kroryla, Lykroa, and the trade caravans that bind them together.

EXPLORATION

Tied to both the notion of *kleos* and the pacification of blessed Melkon – which forces many such outlets to the margins of the kingdom – those possessed with a passion to explore must turn to the colonies in the north, as well as here in the Zaharets. What lies over the next hill, what riches exist in those mountains, and what treasures does that forest hold? These are questions of survival in the Zaharets. Take the kingdom of Adaanshummar – they went to war over a need for tin! Those in Kroryla and Lykroa find it is imperative to find more resources, both for their own use and to trade back with the homeland. And so, those who see the need and have the curiosity often work with Jackal packs to push back the darkness surrounding the Zaharets. Often, they find natural resources and strange ruins and bring back riches, lost knowledge, and more to the city that desperately needs such things.

INSPIRATION

Much like the Jackals found among the Luathi, there are those among the Melkoni who are touched by the gods. Those blessed – or cursed – by oracles, prophets, or the Pantheon, often take to the War Road seeking purpose or absolution. Others touched by the gods find themselves sent out into the wilds of the War Road. 'Chosen' to accomplish some great victory over chaos or cthonic powers, these Jackals are rarely blessed with a kind end or fate. Kroryla remembers known Jackals for their deeds; sadly, many Jackals fall, unknown and unremembered in the dust of the War Road, slain as – or before – they accomplish their divinely appointed task.

MELKONI HISTORY

For all the Gerwa claims that they hold the true history of the world, we of Melkon still maintain records of our history and the history of the Zaharets, which extend further back than the tales of the Trauj and the knowledge of the Luathi Hasheers. As I know the history of my people, so long as my patron muse, Kleo, continues to inspire me, I will relate it here.

THE EARLY DAYS OF CREATION

Our poets tell us that at the dawn of the world, the cthonic deities walked along the surface of the earth and formed the world. They created the trees, the seas, the heavens, and humanity. However, instead of stewarding creation – as was their role – they claimed all of creation as their domain. They warred with each other, with the Six, and with the giants who walked the earth in those days. Tales such as the *Theogony* and the *Gigamachiad* chronicle these wars. During this time, humanity crouched in the darkness, pressed in on all sides by the servants of the cthonic gods, such as the Takan, the Nehushta, and the Nyssalis. Some worshiped the cthonic gods, allowing the gods to possess them and giving rise to the tyrant kings of old. These cults still survive to this day. It was at this time the first oracle of Pythen arose and prophesied the birth of new stewards who would cast the cthonic into Hakides. As told in Theogony, the Earth secretly birthed Araton and his generations into the world. This began the great wars depicted in the *Gigamachiad*, which ended when the old gods were cast into Hakides' realm and the river Ikkora was established as the boundary between the living and the dead. Araton raised the mountain Vonokental, and the Pantheon took up the stewardship of creation.

ELKIA AND SARDON

The history of Melkon proper begins in the time of the Grand Kingdoms, when Lukka, Kelesh across the Mountains, and Sardon ruled the Zaharets. These Hulathi kingdoms were founded by the survivors of *Ouwathia Oulermo*, who fled their gods' wrath that sank their island home beneath the waves. As we know from the ancient stories, this was a time of giants, and the Hulathi battled with the chaotic forces of ruined Keta – and their successor, Mouadah – to establish law and land for the tribes of humanity that resided in the Zaharets. The northern kingdom of Sardon was the greatest of these Grand Kingdoms. Long after Kelesh across the Mountains fell to Mouadah and Lukka began to dissolve beneath the waves of the great Takan hoardings, Sardon stood defiant against the darkness in the north and the east. Sardon's ties with the Hann of *Ekur Enir* – the Bright House, which is Like a Mountain – granted them knowledge, power, and prosperity beyond that of the other kingdoms of the world. When Fuenten IV led his great ordeal against the Gates of the East, the people of Sardon joined with their brethren and rallied to the king's call. Elkia the Great remained in Sardon to watch over the kingdom and govern its people in her mother's stead. When the armies of Hulathi fell on the *Denkrith Uhmann* far to the north to satisfy Fuenten's folly, the glory of the Hulathi passed from this world. Elkia herself was only half child of silver, as her father was a great warrior of the common folk, and the queen loved him.

As darkness pressed against Sardon on all sides, Elkia held the torch of hope for her people. It was Elkia who met with Araton, echoing on earth the battles of heaven. And it was Elkia who lent aid to *Ekur Enir* as the Hann fell into darkness, madness, and death. *Ekur Enir* passed from the knowledge of the world, became *Eki Ezeru*, 'The Twice-Cursed House,' and closed its gates two decades later. Lukka fell as the Takan, thought destroyed by the ordeal, swept out of the north and the Vori Wastes to destroy Sardon's sister. Still, Elkia kept the fires of law burning in the west for nearly a hundred years, blessed as she was by the blood of her mother. And in the end, at the age of 187, Elkia went to sleep with her forebearers. Those cities in the west who owed her the debt of existence took the name 'Melkoni,' meaning 'those of Elkia,' to honour this last, great Hulathi queen of Sardon. Sadly, the law Elkia defended passed with her death, and the Melkoni fell into petty squabbles and wars, losing their kingdom. Thus, the city-states of Melkon were born.

THE CITY-STATES

After the fall of Sardon, each city in blessed Melkon became independent points of light in a sea of chaos. The gates to Hakides were broken down during this time – some epics claim the cults of the cthonic gods opened them – and the creatures and terrors imprisoned below were once again set loose upon the world. People sheltered behind walls erected in ages past to weather the storms of chaos that plagued the land. Araton blessed the warriors of the cities who allied with the Pantheon and submitted to his stewardship. Slowly, the cities of Escanoi, Trovani, Pythos, Sepharakati, Troikos, and Mykinos arose from the chaotic waters. Each city was named for the hero the Pantheon raised to guide and protect them, and these heroes are venerated by local cults to this day. They were, for the most part, successful at pushing back the darkness of this time. Troikos, however, fell to the deprivations of the Takan of Barak Barad; their calls for aid fell on deaf ears, as their brothers and sisters in the other cities had their own concerns and struggles. These cities warred with each other for resources and land. They united in the face of the raiders of Cynaia from the north when the raiders ranged beyond the foothills of the *Hephangeles*, only to fall back into old grudges and contentions after the barbarian threat passed. They also continued to war with the remnants of the gigantes and the servants of the cthonic ones. Araton raised great heroes at this time to battle the remnants of chaos and bring peace and stability to the lands of blessed Melkon. One such hero was Ajax, who battled with Ceenon the kyklops.

The Story of Ajax and Ceenon

Ajax was a hero of renown, chosen by Araton to banish Ceenon the kyklops from eastern Melkon. Araton inspired Ajax – some poems go so far as to say the god was the hero's father. Ajax was known as a hero far and wide throughout Melkon. He was drawn to the conflicts of that time, settling them with words when people listened and with his great spear, *Keranastali*, when force was needed to bring a swift end to disputes. Those few kyklopies who, after the great war, declared loyalty to the Pantheon and submitted to their stewardship crafted *Keranastali* for Ajax. At this time, Ceenon was the greatest of the kyklopies, a chief among those who rejected the Pantheon and terrorised the lands of eastern Melkon. He claimed all the land on the eastern side of the Denphora Straits, including the city of Mykinos, the Valley of Troikos, and the lands now held by Kroryla. Mykinos called for aid and consulted the oracle at Pythen to divine Araton's will and who they should send. The oracle declared Araton would send Ajax to oppose Ceenon and his line:

Send Ajax to stand against the earth,
His spear to cleave the wheat.
Beware the giant's cunning tongue,
And the doom within its meat.

No one knew what the oracle meant, save that Ajax needed to travel east to oppose Ceenon, who was known as the most cunning of all the beasts of the earth. His brood aided him and lured Melkoni to also aid him. From these roots does the poisonous tree of the cult of Ceenon still plague Melkon, living on to this day. So, Ajax boarded his ship and sailed east. Immediately, they were caught in a violent storm. Ajax and his oarsmen pulled against the winds to no avail. The winds forced them away from the shores of eastern Melkon, for they were foul winds, conjured by Ceenon for his foul purposes. The chief of all kyklopies knew the judgment of heaven was against him, and his days upon the earth were numbered; but he needed time to bring his black heart's plan to fullness. Ajax's ship was blown off course by the will of Ceenon, and instead of landing in Mykinos' harbor, it ran aground in the forests of the Valley of Troikos. While his warriors beached the ship and began to repair it, Ajax stalked Ceenon through the Valley of Troikos. His people, warriors all, cried for him to wait, but Ajax was driven by some dread. Armed only with *Keranastali* and his great shield, Ajax raced over the vales and hills of Troikos like a deer and hunted Ceenon like a wolf. None, not even the gods, could see the fate of Ajax or the doom that drew him onward. For 40 days, Ajax hunted Ceenon, eschewing food and water during the hunt. And for 40 days Ceenon avoided his pursuer, until, in a house made of stones 30 cubits tall, Ajax came upon Ceenon. Instead of an armed fortress, Ajax found the hearth fires burning and Ceenon welcoming him, the kyklops offering the warrior *xenia* in his home. Wary, Ajax entered the home of Ceenon, knowing the value Araton placed on *xenia*, and the consequences of breaking it. So, he resolved in his heart to not accept any offer of hospitality, neither food nor drink, instead pledging to remain vigilant against his cunning foe. Ceenon welcomed him and asked the hero why he was there. Ajax, ever ready to use discourse to bring peace, sought to reason with Ceenon. He spoke words of peace, of submission to Araton, of purpose with his brothers who forged for the Pantheon. Ceenon countered with words of freedom, dominance, independence, and usurpation. They spoke long into the night, and all the while, Ceenon stirred a great pot of some strange stew.

Three times did Ajax refuse Ceenon's hospitality, and four times did Ceenon offer it. Finally, throat raw from speaking, Ajax accepted the wine Ceenon offered him and the *xenia* that went with it. Ceenon exulted in his heart, for this was the first of his great traps. Near dawn, Ajax saw no resolution, but feared to slay Ceenon in his home, which would surely bring down the curse of Araton upon his head. Ceenon was fearful as well, for he knew if Ajax left, it would come down to a battle of might and he would fall before *Keranastali*. For his brethren had forged the great spear with enchantments that parted the bronze, flesh, and bone of the kyklopies. So, Ceenon offered Ajax the stew he had been stirring all night. Driven to hunger by the hunt and the strong wine of the kyklops, Ajax accepted the offered bowl and ate a meal with his foe. Ceenon exulted in his heart, for this was the second of his great traps. When Ajax finished the stew, Ceenon cried out:

Cursed are you, by him who rules,
All of earth and heaven.
For by his laws, all must die
Who taste the flesh of men.

Ajax demanded the kyklops explain, and Ceenon revealed three tunics. Then Ajax realised what the oracle had meant, for the tunics were the clothes of those he loved most in this world: his wife and two of his children. In his rage, Ajax drew *Keranastali* and smote the kyklops through the breast, pinning him to the wall. Ceenon exulted in his heart, for this was the last and greatest of his traps. With a laugh on his bloodied lips, Ceenon cried to the heavens, to ensure Araton bore witness to the events of the day. He hurled his words to the heights of Vonokental, saying:

If Araton is just and rules
All of earth and heaven
Twice cursed be Ajax for his deeds,
Cursed be he above all men
For in my home, he drew his spear
And cast a mortal wound
Breaking laws of god and men
Sealing this mortal's doom.

A thunderbolt split the sky, rending the great stone ceiling of the kyklops' home. It smote Ajax in the breast, bearing with it the curse of Araton – who, being just, could do nothing else. Ajax violated not one but three of the Pantheon's commands: he did not slay Ceenon but spoke with him; he consumed the flesh of man, even the flesh of his own family; and he slew his host, despite the laws of xenia. Araton's bolt burned the humanity out of Ajax and sent the former hero loping into the woods on all fours as a ravenous, man-eating beast.

This is but one telling of the tale of Ajax and Ceenon; there are others that state Ceenon did not die in his home but fled from Araton's wrath, or that Ajax's final sin was the eating of the kyklops' flesh. It is said Ajax still wanders the eastern lands of blessed Melkon, cursed for his great sins by Araton who loved him. Some say he wanders as a man, others as a ravenous wolf, and that he will wander until the last of Ceenon's brood are slain. Lykos, the founder of Kroryla and foe of the Daughters of Ceenon, is said to be Ajax's descendant. Ajax's youngest son survived the kyklops' foul trap and raised his descendants to cleanse the stain of the curse from his line. Considering how Lykos' tale ends, I would say he did so in the eyes of Araton and the Pantheon. However, whether these efforts freed Ajax is unknown, for the tales of the beasts that haunt the Valley of Troikos continue.

Near the end of this period, trade and xenia drove most of the cities to end their grudges. Araton showed his power in blessing those cities that ended their conflicts and turned their warriors against the cthonic beasts. He allowed the cities that did not do so to fall beneath the sway of cthonic gods, and they were ruined. For several centuries, blessed Melkon knew peace. Trade, culture, and most importantly, philosophy grew. Still, if a garden is not tended, after time the weeds return. And so the seeds of the great western war blossomed during the time of peace.

THE WAR AND THE COLONIES

For a time, blessed Melkon prospered in the peace Araton granted them. The Cynaian tribes kept to the north of the Kimmarin Steppes, and the cities of Melkon turned their eyes north. Slowly, they established the colonies Arakata, Krarata, and Aruto in the lands of the Hephangeles, which sent great wealth back to their home cities. They also began trade with the Cynaians, and while raids and brief wars broke out occasionally, it was generally a time of growth, expansion, and prosperity for the colonies. The Cynaians' blood and traditions mixed with those of blessed Melkon, and the colonies gave birth to a hardy and rugged people. Great herds of Cynaian horses were brought into the folds of Melkoni pens.

The rise of great thinkers, known as philosophers, began in blessed Melkon proper at this time. It seemed as though nothing could break the peace of this great time. Then, in a single season, the greatest war of our time began. Rastus, the *anaxi* of Trovani, invited Dorian, the *anaxi* of Mykinos to visit blessed Melkon proper and hosted him for a season. During this time, Dorian's eye roved and caught the eye of Aoede, and their passions were inflamed for one another. They, finding each other fair in their eyes, gave into their lust. When Dorian left Trovani, he did so under the cover of night, and with Aoede. It should be noted, this is the version of the tale told in the east. Those in the west say Dorian's advances were unwanted and he kidnapped Aoede by force and took her back to Mykinos. Rastus raised a mighty army to take back his bride, while Dorian drew his allies to himself. The war of the cities – the *Poleisipolemic* – began, and it has raged on for a decade and shows no sign of stopping. What darkness creeps back into Melkon while the greatest warriors of this generation bleed and die, fighting over one king's hubris?

It is said the oracle at Pythen gave the following warning, when asked:

Araton declares the news
A new order on the earth.
To end the demi-gods abroad.
No more shall they give birth,
To mortal flesh with breath divine,
Nevermore to pair.
A killing Field to spring anew,
For the earth will never bear,
The mingling of heav'n and earth,
In mortal flesh again.
Let this war be a reaper's field
And bring them to their end.

It seems this oracle believes the great war heralds a change for Melkon. Is it a sign, a warning, of the end of the time of heroes? Araton forfend, while you from Vonokental have perfect vision and guardianship of this world, I fear the world still needs heroes for the days to come; especially if Kalisto's cryptic warnings and those of the Yahtahmi of the Trauj hold true. Perhaps this is the reason for the rise of Jackals? The gods know what is coming; could they be raising up the age of Jackals as the age of heroes comes to its close?

Establishing Kroryla

During this time of war, Lykos, descendant of Ajax, followed the prompting of his household heroes and the oracles of Araton to head into the east and establish a new home for his people. Journeying to the eastern edge of the Zaharets, Lykos set down the foundations of Kroryla and was drawn into conflict with the Daughters of Ceenon. As is told elsewhere, Lykos' deeds raised a city from the wilderness, establishing stewardship over the city of Kroryla and putting an end to the threat of the Daughters of Ceenon. (Although, according to Kalisto's tales, the end of that threat is not as permanent as we may have hoped. For the cult of Ceenon still holds sway in the east.) Since Lykos' apotheosis and the founding of Kroryla, the Melkoni of the Zaharets have enjoyed a time of unprecedented prosperity. The Vori Vana hold treasures of riches, as do the forests of Troikos. The city of Kroryla, blessed by both its patron goddess and the Lykosian hero cult, prospers away from the bloodshed in the west. It has done so well under the wise rule of its *anaxi* that it, too, looks to sponsor its first colony: the town of Lykroa.

Lykroa - The New Colony

Two days north of Kroryla lies the Hylekloro, a large forest growing north and west as it descends to fill the valley of Troikos. The vast forest on the edge of the Vori Vana is filled with natural springs, strange ruins, and a bounty of the earth's wealth. It is here Glykera seeks to build Kroryla's first colony: Lykroa. Glykera, with support and promises of land grants, spurred a move to the north. A large tent city sits on the edge of the forest, as laborers work to lay the foundations for the town. Work, according to Kalisto, was cut short when many of the Lykosians who guard the site were slain. It seems the cult of Ceenon is not as dead as was once believed, and the cthonic cult nearly wiped out the last of the Lykosian mystery initiates, though they were foiled in their plot by the intervention of a group of Jackals. Again, what providence from Araton guides these mendicant warriors to the places where they are most needed? Let no Melkoni say Araton falters in his stewardship of creation; from Vonokental, the eyes of the Just One watch over his people – including this small colony growing in the Land of Risings.

THE PANTHEON

All Melkoni look to the Pantheon on Vonokental for the guidance, protection, and rule of law other cultures find in their gods. Attempting to cover the myriad of great stewards and local spirits, nymphs, dryads, and heroes that make up the Pantheon would take a work much greater than my own. Thus, I recount here those of the Pantheon especially venerated in the east, in and around the region of Kroryla and Lykroa. As the communities' local patrons, Lykos and Ryla have the most highly venerated cults in the city. However, Araton and his brothers, as well as his queen, all have temples in Kroryla.

ARATON

The Just One and High Steward of Creation

Araton is the lord of Vonokental and the chief of the Pantheon. His home is on the blessed mountain, from where his eyes rove to and fro in Melkon, ever seeking to bless the righteous and curse the cruel. He took up stewardship over creation in the days of the *Gigamachiad*, birthed by Heaven and Earth to end the reign of the old gods. He, along with his brothers, wife, and children, waged a great war for creation. Aided by the great heroes of old, they overthrew the predatory old gods and bound them in the abyss. Then Araton, Hetenon, and Hakides divided stewardship over creation. Araton ordered the heavens and took his place on the council of the stars. Hetenon tamed the chaotic seas, and Hakides took over stewardship of the abyss. Araton is lord of thousands of spirits – those of earth, spring, and air – who keep watch over Melkon. His spirits and eagles bring him news about the realm of Melkon each day, which he then judges in his wisdom and power. All Melkoni honour Araton for his power and stewardship of creation, and for establishing the realm of blessed Melkon.

AKRAIA

The Soul of Beauty and Queen of the Heavens

Araton's wife, Akraia, is the queen of Vonokental and mother to Ryla, Ryla's siblings, and the muses. In her, Melkoni find a patron for all the arts, all things beautiful, and the wonders that sustain the soul. It is she – through her followers – who guides women through childbirth safely and supports Ryla in her defence of hearth and home. She arose to stand by Araton's side during the *Gigamachiad*, providing the Pantheon and their warriors succor and aid. Akraia, in the aftermath of the war, wove the great Pallynos – the net of sleep – which bound the old ones in lethargy and slumber so Hakides could take them down into the abyss. She watches over Melkon through the eyes of her chosen bird, the peacock, whose eyes never close and see all. All Melkoni honour Akraia for her beauty, inspiration, and continued support of Araton and blessed Melkon.

HETENON

The Tempest and Lord of the wine-dark Sea

Hetenon is the eldest of the line of Heaven and Earth. Because his connection to the old gods was strongest, he was set to the task of taming the chaotic waters of the world. According to the *Gigamachiad*, Hetenon's rage flared mightily, and he flooded the world to scour the taint of the old gods from the land. Humanity survived due to Araton's intervention; he gathered the righteous on the heights of Vonokental, while his brother raged below. Akraia soothed Hetenon's rage, and the seas retreated to their proper places. Hetenon is known for his capricious nature – like his domain, he is quick to anger and curse, and just as quick to calm and forgive. Melkoni sailors always bring one of Hetenon's chosen – the *delphyians* – aboard when sailing into the wine-dark sea. Hetenon's servants often take the form of dolphins, rescuing those righteous who are thrown overboard, bringing warnings and messages from the king of the seas, and pulling the unrighteous down to the abyss by way of the sea.

HAKIDES

The Wise and Lord of the Abyss

Hakides is the youngest of the line of Heaven and Earth and lord of the abyss, a realm that now bears his name. In the mind of a Melkoni, there is no division between Hakides, the land of the dead, and Hakides, the ruler of that land. During the time of the Gigamachiad, Hakides was filled with courage and stole across the Ikkora, into the depths of the abyss, and to the very threshold of the underworld to bring back the kyklopies and their weapons that Kronis had bound there. It was Hakides who secured the kyklopies' aid to help the Pantheon overthrew the old gods. In the aftermath of the war, Hakides took up stewardship of the abyss; in his wisdom, he understood Hetenon's fickle nature and the need for Araton's justice. He is now the jailer of the bound ones and their servants, the kyklopies. These beings – wholly or partially immortal – languish in his realm, tormented for their assault on the order of creation. At his side sits a throne for his beloved Koraa, a daughter of the earth who spends half the year with him in Hakides and the other half scattering seeds upon the earth. Hakides is considered the wisest of all the Pantheon, as he can access the wisdom of the dead. Araton often calls him to Vonokental for advice and his hounds accompany him everywhere he goes. All Melkoni honour Hakides for his wisdom and sacrifice, and for his guardianship of the abyss, the dead, and the *kleos* of the dead.

RYLA

Lady of Passion and War

Daughter of Araton and Arkaia, Ryla is the warrior of the Pantheon. She embodies the passions that grip the Melkoni soul. Born fully grown during the events of the Gigamachiad, Ryla continued to hunt and battle the cthonic and chaotic powers even after the war's end. The passages in the *Gigamachiad* that recount her great victories – and the poems that tell of her battles against the resurgence of chaos after the fall of Sardon – are among the most retold of all the epics. Her warriors, the Rylareia, are still counted as warriors of renown. Their skill at bringing both pleasure and healing to the body is likewise known throughout the land. Blessed are the anaxi of Melkon who have a Rylareia as a guard, adviser, and lover! All Melkoni honour Ryla for her prowess, her passion, and the rest she grants. Ryla's cult is influential – especially in Kroryla, the city that bears her name. They act as commanders of the garrison, watch over the lands surrounding the city, and are among the greatest and most compassionate healers in the city. The Rylareia throughout Melkon are drawn to Kroryla by dreams and omens. It is not clear whether Ryla sees a great war rising in the east or seeks to spare her followers from fighting in the civil war of the west. In either case, Kroryla's temple to Ryla is overflowing with the Rylareia, whose daily sparring practices draw crowds from the city.

KLEOS

The Melkoni concept of *kleos* is like the Trauj concept of *mavok*. However, instead of assuring a blessed place among the ancestors, *kleos* represents the deeds of one's life for which they are remembered after death. All Melkoni, when they pass, rely on their families to build up the glory of their deeds in life so they are remembered by the pouring out of libations. So long as one is remembered in the world of the living, they will continue to exist in Hakides; it is when they are forgotten that the dead are bathed in the Ikkora, washed clean of all memory, and sent back to be reborn into this world. As such, *kleos* ensures existence in Hakides' kingdom. Some seek *kleos* for its own sake, pursuing a life of such renown they are never forgotten. This can often work against them, though, for as often as the deeds that merit remembrance are great and honorable, so too are they vile and provoke damnation of the departed soul. Many stories tell of the unique punishments Hakides inflicts on those with such foul *kleos*. The wisdom of Hakides guides him in both his rewards of the righteous and his punishments of the wicked.

THE HERO CULTS

Each city in blessed Melkon has temples and shrines to their local heroes, those who pushed back the chaos of the world to establish bastions of law through strength of arms and blessings of the Pantheon. These heroes founded many of the grand cities in blessed Melkon, and the inhabitants venerate the founding heroes to ensure the continued existence of the city. Thus, the heroes' *kleos* and survival in Hakides are assured.

LYKOS

Kroryla's heroic founder, Lykos, is the descendant of Ajax and Ryla and was born under great signs and portents. On the day of his birth, the sun stood tall in the sky, stopping at noon for several hours as his mother finished delivering her child. Hawks followed the boy throughout his youth, as a sign of Ryla's blessing. He slew Agathon the One-eyed – a tyrant king who attempted to establish his own kingdom east of Mykinos – and freed the tyrant's slaves and the golden rams of Akraia. Finally, during his 30th year, Ryla herself appeared to Lykos and told him of his ancestor Ajax, the struggle against Ceenon, and his great destiny to establish the newest of Melkon's colonies. Lykos set out from Mykinos and followed a golden hart to find the land for his new city. When they arrived in the east, the hart laid down and died on the spot where the Lykosian temple now stands in Kroryla, and Lykos crafted his bow from the hart's horns and flesh.

Thus began the great trials of Lykos – seven great deeds that accomplished the founding of Kroryla, the defeat of the Daughters of Ceenon, and Lykos' elevation to the courts of Araton as one of the honored heroes. The Lykosian cult seeks to emulate their founder by expanding Kroryla's influence, defending it from chaotic beasts – such as the Takan and the Nyssalis, which Lykos battled when he claimed the land for Kroryla – and bringing peace and law to the lands. It was by the Lykosians' blades and strength the initial foundations for Lykroa were established; given enough time to recover from their latest battle with the Cult of Ceenon, the Lykosians will lead the Melkoni of the east to greatness. There is little wonder Jackal packs who find themselves in the company of Lykosian warriors come to value not only their skill with the blade, but also their abilities with soothing words, crafting, and protection. Their skill is matched only by their hatred of the cthonic cults of this world – a hatred born of Lykos' own ancestor's line and Ryla's never-ending struggle against those beings.

THE CTHONIC CULTS

There are those in blessed Melkon who turn from the guidance and rulership of the Pantheon and direct their eyes downward, toward the abyss and Hakides, seeking power and might from the bound cthonic ones. They move beyond the mandate of the heavens and seek domination and rulership instead of stewardship. Much like the mouathenics of the Zaharets – who turn to the darkness that came before our world for the ability to dominate and control the world around them – these cthonic cults work to undo the bindings of Araton and beseech the kyklopies, the bound ones, and those who were cast into the depth of the abyss for a portion of their power. These desperate and wicked people engage in all manner of abominations in the eyes of Araton, such as cannibalism, blood sacrifice, and undermining the foundations of the world. As these cults grow, all we enjoy in blessed Melkon may fall into ruin and subjugation.

THE CULT OF CEENON

The main cthonic cult in the east, the cult of Ceenon works against the Pantheon and the Lykosians of Kroryla. This deplorable sect seeks to slay all Lykosians, restore the Daughters of Ceenon to flesh, and rule as tyrants over Kroryla. They almost succeeded at the first two of their goals; it was only the bevy of Jackals who intervened that stopped the cult from slaying the last of the Lykosians initiated into the temple's higher mysteries: Kalisto. As she tells it, the cults slew those they found abroad, especially around the town of Lykroa, before attacking the temple in Kroryla. Utilizing foul rites, they summoned poisonous serpents to slay those inside the temple and began a rite to return the Daughters to flesh. So, the war between Ajax and Ceenon rages anew in the blood of their descendants. Until the Lykosians end their ancient foes, or are slain by them, the innocents of Kroryla and Lykroa are caught in the violence and bloodshed.

THE TYPHOEUSIA

Kalisto shared her concern about this ubiquitous cult in the west springing up within the walls of Kroryla. Typhoeus was the greatest of all the old gods' warriors before the Pantheon overthrew them and cast the bound ones into Hakides, as told in the *Gigamachiad*. The epic describes Typhoeus as a terrible and lawless being, with the heads of a Nyssalis springing out from his back. These snake heads spewed poison, fire, and blasphemies against the heavens. The *Gigamachiad* records many of his offspring, which he begat upon the earth in elder days. The Nyssalis are the most famous of his get, but there are also the chimera and the hounds of Hakides. During the fall of Sardon and the rise of the city-states, when the Bound Ones broke free and crossed the Ikkora back into the lands of the living, Typhoeus led the cthonic forces. Ryla herself descended to meet Typhoeus in one-on-one combat on the foothills of Vonokental. Though she could not slay Typhoeus, the beast could not overcome her; in the end, Araton and his daughter once again bound Typhoeus and cast him back over the river Ikkora. The *Typhouesia* cult that worships this cthonic power searches for entrances into Hakides and seeks the power and might to free their master. It is rumored several such entrances exist within the Vori Vana and the Vori Wastes. The Rylareia also seek out these portals to the underworld, establishing small fortresses to guard them from creatures that try to escape Hakides, and to prevent the living from descending into Hakides for their own deviant purposes. Glykera and Kalisto work closely with the Krorylan temple of Ryla to ensure they have the support and resources to hunt the *Typhoeusia* to annihilation, but Typhoeus still calls to the weak and the desperate from his prison in Hakides.

NEW RITES

RYLAREIA

The Restful Embrace

The followers of Ryla know secret ways to soothe the souls and the flesh of those around them. Those who spend the night in the arms of a Rylareia find themselves refreshed in a way they did not know was possible. During this rite, Ryla embraces her follower so they may embrace those around them and, renewed, continue her work in the world.

THE RESTFUL EMBRACE			
Location to learn:	Temple of Ryla in Kroryla or Melkon		
Devotion Points:	10	Clash Point Cost:	All
Tradition:	Ryla (Light)	Range:	Touch
Duration:	1 night		
Effect			
The Rylareia spends the night with the target in restful repose. This is not an inherently sexual act, though that interpretation of this rite is common in the temples of Ryla. The time is spent talking, sharing, soothing, and calming both souls and bodies. When dawn breaks, both the Rylareia and their target awaken refreshed and renewed. Both heal 1d6 Mettle damage and receive the Passions Renewed trait, which may be called upon once that day during any check.			
Critical success:	The Passions Renewed trait may be called upon twice		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None
Advancements			
A Deeper Sleep: this rite also heals 1 Wound per row (or 2, on a critical invocation). *The Goddess's Touch:* this rite also restores a Fate Point.			

Unerring Eye

Ryla is the daughter of Araton; she learned to hunt from the king of the Vonokental, whose javelins fall like rain on his enemies. Ryla imparts her skill to chosen Rylareia, whose mastery of the bow and the javelin have no equal in the realms of Melkon or the Zaharets.

UNERRING EYE			
Location to learn:	Temple of Ryla in Kroryla or Melkon		
Devotion Points:	3	Clash Point Cost:	2
Tradition:	Ryla (Shadow)	Range:	Personal
Duration:	Sustained; 1-minute intervals		
Effect			
The Rylareia gains their goddess's insight into the hunt, granting them a bonus to their Ranged Combat, Perception, and Survival skills equal to their Devotion.			
Critical success:	The skill bonus is doubled		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None
Advancements			
The Unerring Eye: the Rylareria's aim is unerring, sending bolts where they do the most damage. Their ranged attacks ignore 2 Protection, which stacks with other talents that reduce Protection. *Grace of Heaven:* the Rylareia does not need to track ammunition while this rite is invoked, as their quiver never runs dry, and they never lack for javelins.			

A Secret Fire

According to the tales in blessed Melkon, the giant Apomatheus stole knowledge from Araton and disbursed it among the city-states of Melkon. This knowledge – of metallurgy, fire, and war – spiraled out of control, claiming many lives and seeding the foundations for the great war that now rages in the west. Araton sent Ryla to slay Apomatheus and hid the desire for such knowledge within Ryla to curtail the rampant destruction. Rylareia can tap into this knowledge to aid them in their daily activities.

A SECRET FIRE			
Location to learn:	Temple of Ryla in Kroryla or Melkon		
Devotion Points:	2	Clash Point Cost:	2
Tradition:	Ryla (Shadow)	Range:	Personal
Duration:	1 action		
Effect			
The Rylareia gains access to their goddess' hidden insights and knowledge, granting them a bonus to their Culture (Own), Craft, and Trade skills equal to their Devotion.			
Critical success:	The skill bonus is doubled		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None
Advancements			
Apomatheus' Rage: the Rylareia benefits from the Rending Strike talent (page 111 in Jackals) while this rite is invoked. If they already possess that talent, they make the test at a hard difficulty instead of at half skill. *A Perfect Strike:* understanding how to make something is the first step in understanding how best to destroy it. While this rite is invoked, reduce the 'break materials' difficulty (page 69 in Jackals) by 1 difficulty step (from hard to difficult, from difficult to normal, etc.). Additionally, the Rylareia gains +1 Protection against Mettle damage incurred while attempting to break materials.			

Cthonic Warrior

Ryla was among Araton's first children, born during the events of the Gigamachiad. She is his spear, which Araton hurled at the giants, cthonic legions, and darkness that spawned during the giants' rule. To this day, the Rylareia attempt to continue their patron's work, slaying the last remnants of the giant's age. Over the centuries, the Rylareia developed special rites for dealing with their hated foes.

CTHONIC WARRIOR			
Location to learn:	**Temple of Ryla in Kroryla or Melkon**		
Devotion Points:	4	Clash Point Cost:	1
Tradition:	Ryla (Shadow)	Range:	Self
Duration:	Sustained; 1-minute intervals		
Effect			
The Rylareia gains +2 Clash Points, +2 Protection, and a bonus to combat skills and Lore equal to their Devotion while fighting monstrous creatures or the Dead.			
Critical success:	The rite is sustained for an additional interval for free		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None
Advancements			
The Passions Consume: the Rylareia may include Takan and rathic in this rite. *Lessons from the Gigamachiad:* the Rylareia may challenge creatures targeted by this rite as a Clash Point action (6 CP). They additionally increase the Clash Point cost for reactions from their challenged foe by 1 (see page 69 in Jackals) and gain +2 Protection from challenged targets.			

LYKOSIAN

Trial of the Walls

One of Lykos' trials was to raise the walls of Kroryla before the children of Ceenon arrived and wiped out the newly formed town. How he accomplished this task is a mystery to the non-initiated and a sure sign of his divine nature. The Lykosians walk in his footsteps, raising the walls of the weak and shattering the fortresses of the unjust.

TRIAL OF THE WALLS			
Location to learn:	**Temple of Lykos in Kroryla**		
Devotion Points:	4	Clash Point Cost:	3
Tradition:	Lykos (Shadow)	Range:	Self
Duration:	Instant, as part of a Craft check		
Effect			
This rite grants the Lykosian the ability to strengthen the materials around them. They gain a bonus to Craft equal to their Devotion, and after a successful Craft check, may increase the 'break materials' difficulty (see page 69 in Jackals) by 1 difficulty step. The Lykosian may attempt this check multiple times but may not increase the difficulty by more than 2 steps.			
Critical success:	The Warrior may roll twice for the Craft check and take the desired result		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None

Advancements
You Will Not Sunder This Blade: this rite may now be applied to equipment, with the additional cost of 2r. It makes the piece of equipment in question indestructible – immune to sundering, shattering, or abilities that reduce its efficacy.
A Monument for the Pantheon: when making a successful Craft check to increase the difficulty to break an item or material, the Warrior may also increase the number of successes needed to break an item by 2. The Lykosian may make this check multiple times but may not increase the successes needed by more than 4.

Trial of Fire

Lykos was privy to the rites and knowledge of his mother's, Ryla's, cult. He knew that if he wanted to properly dedicate the temples of the Pantheon, so that his town would be under Araton's blessing, he must carry the sacred fire from the temples in the west to Kroryla. The flames scared Lykos with terrible wisdom and knowledge of his death. Despite the pain and burdens, Lykos lit the braziers and consecrated the temples.

TRIAL OF FIRE			
Location to learn:	Temple of Lykos in Kroryla		
Devotion Points:	3	Clash Point Cost:	3
Tradition:	Lykos (Shadow)	Range:	Personal
Duration:	Sustained; 1-hour intervals		
Effect			
This rite makes the Warrior immune to lesser fires and heat. This provides +1 Protection for Mettle damage suffered from failed travel checks, as well as +4 Protection versus flames and fire-based attacks. Additionally, it provides a bonus to the Warrior's Endurance checks against fire and heat-based events.			
Critical success:	This rite is sustained for an additional interval for free		
Defence:	None	Save effect:	None
Advancements			
Prophecy in the Flames: the Warrior may spend the duration of the invocation staring into a sacred flame (either at a temple or sanctified by 100 ss of incense). At the end of the hour, the Warrior may spend a Fate Point and ask the Loremaster one yes-or-no question, as though they divined the answer in the flames.			
The Secret of Fire: the Warrior ignores the scarring modifiers for damage inflicted by magic, fire, or a brutal enemy (page 71 in Jackals).			

Trial of Paths

During his trials, Lykos slew a clan of Takan and used their blood in the mortar of the streets of Kroryla. The *Lykosiad* prophesies say so long as the fires of the temples burn, and the Warriors of Lykos protect the city, no Takan can step foot on the streets of Kroryla. Taking inspiration from their founder, the Lykosians can make themselves repugnant to the Takan, striking terror and hatred in their bestial hearts.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">TRIAL OF PATHS</th></tr>
<tr><td>Location to learn:</td><td colspan="3">Temple of Lykos in Kroryla</td></tr>
<tr><td>Devotion Points:</td><td>3</td><td>Clash Point Cost:</td><td>2</td></tr>
<tr><td>Tradition:</td><td>Lykos (Shadow)</td><td>Range:</td><td>Line of Sight</td></tr>
<tr><td>Duration:</td><td colspan="3">Sustained; 1-minute intervals</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Effect</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">The Warrior gains the trait Slayer of the Beasts to all checks involving the Takan. Any Takan within line of sight that recognises the Lykosian gains the trait Slayer of our Kin, which acts as a negative trait to all attacks and Morale rolls, save for attacks against the Lykosian.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Critical success:</td><td colspan="3">The rite is sustained for an additional interval for free</td></tr>
<tr><td>Defence:</td><td>None</td><td>Save effect:</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Advancements</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4"><i>The Way is Open:</i> the Warrior enjoys +3 Movement and +3 Initiative while this rite is active. Invoking this rite during combat adjusts the lowest Jackal Initiative slot up by 3.
<i>More Blood for the Roads:</i> the Warrior enjoys +3 damage and +1 Clash Point against Takan while this rite is invoked.</td></tr>
</table>

The Ascension of Lykos

As recorded in the *Lykosiad*, when his works were complete and the daughters of Ceenon defeated, Lykos turned his flesh to stone, and his spirit ascended to the halls of Araton on Mount Vonokental. To this day, the Warriors of Lykos revere him, and all Melkoni know Lykos stands at his mother's right hand. This rite acknowledges the apotheosis of Lykos, the deeds he wrought, and his governance of Kroryla.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">THE ASCENSION OF LYKOS</th></tr>
<tr><td>Location to learn:</td><td colspan="3">Temple of Lykos in Kroryla</td></tr>
<tr><td>Devotion Points:</td><td>4</td><td>Clash Point Cost:</td><td>3</td></tr>
<tr><td>Tradition:</td><td>Lykos (Shadow)</td><td>Range:</td><td>Personal</td></tr>
<tr><td>Duration:</td><td colspan="3">Sustained; 1-minute intervals</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Effect</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Lykos inhabits the body of his Warrior. Light shines from their eyes, providing the equivalent of torch light out to 12 yards. Additionally, the Warrior gains a bonus to their Lore and Culture (Own) checks.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Critical success:</td><td colspan="3">The rite is sustained for an additional interval for free</td></tr>
<tr><td>Defence:</td><td>None</td><td>Save effect:</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Advancements</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4"><i>The Glory of Melkon:</i> the Warrior imposes the negative trait Glory of Melkon on all enemy Morale rolls while this rite is invoked.
<i>Purity of Passion:</i> the Warrior may spend 2 Clash Points to turn their gaze upon a target. If that target has Corruption equal to or greater than half the Lykosian's Devotion, it provokes a difficult Defence test. If the target fails, it takes 2d6 damage (ignoring Protection).</td></tr>
</table>

EQUIPMENT

We Melkoni know the gods granted us the knowledge of forge, fire, and metal. Eristos, in his volcanic home, grants inspiration to the Melkoni of the world, pouring his divine breath into their minds. I list here but some of the grand weapons and armour of our people.

BOLTS OF ARATON

125 ss each

These javelins – crafted by the priests of Araton using techniques learned from the kyklopies themselves – are made from acacia wood inlaid with small, silver lightning bolts. They are exquisitely balanced, and their bronze points are worked with several lines of the *Aratoniad*. They are primarily granted to the peltast of the Temple of Araton, but over the years, the temple has made their non-invested versions available at a high price to those of Melkon.

Effect: these javelins count as a normal javelin, but with a range of 100 yards. Magical versions of these weapons exist but are not for sale. They must be found or granted to a Melkoni Jackal by a priest of Araton. The invested versions of these javelins return to the wielder with a thought (costing 2 Clash Points). Additionally, the thrower – if they follow the Pantheon – may spend 2 Devotion Points to add +1d6 lightning damage to a successful attack using these javelins.

EPSILON AXE

400 ss

The mainstay of the city-states' heavy infantry during their decade-long war, the axe's name comes from its resemblance to the Melkoni letter, 'epsilon'. Crafted from bronze and weighted with small bits of other metals – gold, silver, and in rare cases, iron – the blade's weight and curved blade give it extra cutting power against the protection carried and used by the bulk of the *psiloi*.

Effect: the epsilon axe counts as a Heavy 2H weapon, which ignores up to 2 points of soft or natural armour and shields.

BOAR-TOOTHED HELM

Not for sale, useable only by anaxi, on loan from or gifted by nobility or found in old tombs and barrows

Crafted from slivers taken from the last of the *kapros* boars, these helms have always served as a symbol of Melkon nobility and the *anaxi*. Inlaid with silver, precious gems, and lines of the epic poems, these helms light the fires of passion within the bellies of those who wear them.

Effect: the boar-toothed helm provides the following benefits to a Melkoni wearer: +2 Mettle and +1 Protection versus the Dead's Chill of Death.

RYLAREIA SHIELD

Not for sale outside the temples of Ryla; a Rylareia may earn one as a boon from the temple, from a patron, or by paying 600 ss and taking the seasonal action to craft or commission an item while at a temple of Ryla

These bronze-rimmed shields are inscribed with the whole of the world as we Melkoni know it. The top of the shield is marked with the image of holy Vonokental, and Ryla standing next to the throne of Araton; the middle is marked by the plains and forests of western Melkoni, with Rylareria battling kyklopies; and the bottom is an image of Hakides' realm, where the Rylareia enjoy their eternal reward.

Effect: this shield counts as a Melkoni Shield, with additional benefits based on the Courage of the Melkoni holding it. If their Courage is 14 or less, it counts as a typical Melkoni shield (+2 Protection). This bonus increases to +3 Protection if the Melkoni's Courage is between 15 and 17, or +4 Protection if their Courage is 18+.

NEW FATE TALENT

WARRIORS OF LYKOS, STAND!

Any Lykosian may take this talent as a Fate Talent (see page 117 of *Jackals*). Like the demigod they swear to, the Lykosian may endure trials beyond that of mortals. When they spend a Fate Point to survive after being reduced to 0 Wounds, the Lykosian recovers 1d8 Wounds and 2d8 Valour.

CITY VIRTUES

A player may choose any of these City Virtues in lieu of the Cultural Virtues *The Unmoved Soul*, *Bear All Things*, or *The Fires of Life* by playing a Melkoni Jackal with a different grounding and purpose in the Zaharets.

WESTERN REFUGEE

Melkoni refugees (page 112) who flee into the Zaharets from the war in the west often find themselves settling in Kroryla, Lykroa, and Mikro. These refugees bear the scars of the war on their bodies, minds, and souls. Melkoni Jackals with this Virtue struggle to find a place for themselves and their people in the Land of Risings. They may call upon this Virtue to endure overwhelming events, attempt to calm or soothe the pains of others, or fight for a better future.

MELKONI COLONIST

Melkoni sometimes travel into the Zaharets as colonists (page 112), seeking to stake a claim in the east for themselves and for blessed Melkon. They are hardy, adventurous, and devoted to the interests of Melkon in the Zaharets. Melkoni Jackals with this virtue may call upon it to stand up to hardship, craft or repair needed items, and explore the Lands of Risings.

CITIZEN OF KRORYLA

Melkoni citizens of Kroryla (page 112) are true-born children of the Zaharets. They struggle to define their own path, caught between the west and the east. As such, they are resourceful, tenacious, and metropolitan. Melkoni Jackals with this Virtue may call upon it to trade with and relate to the other cultures of the Zaharets, stand in defence of their city, and salve the wounds of the Melkoni around them.

As I look west, toward home and hearth in Escanoi, my muse, Kleo, passes on to grace another with her inspiration. I leave a copy of my book here in Kroryla, having sent copies to Ameena Noani, Kephhi, and Anahaluf, as well. In it, I share the tales from my journey and the insight I gained into the Zaharets, and provide context for the events that occurred during humanity's history, shaped by the deeds of the mighty, the foul, and the mundane. It is my hope that through this work, all may share in the bounty of knowledge revealed to me. The ship of Delmos prepares to head west, and I go with it.

APPENDIX

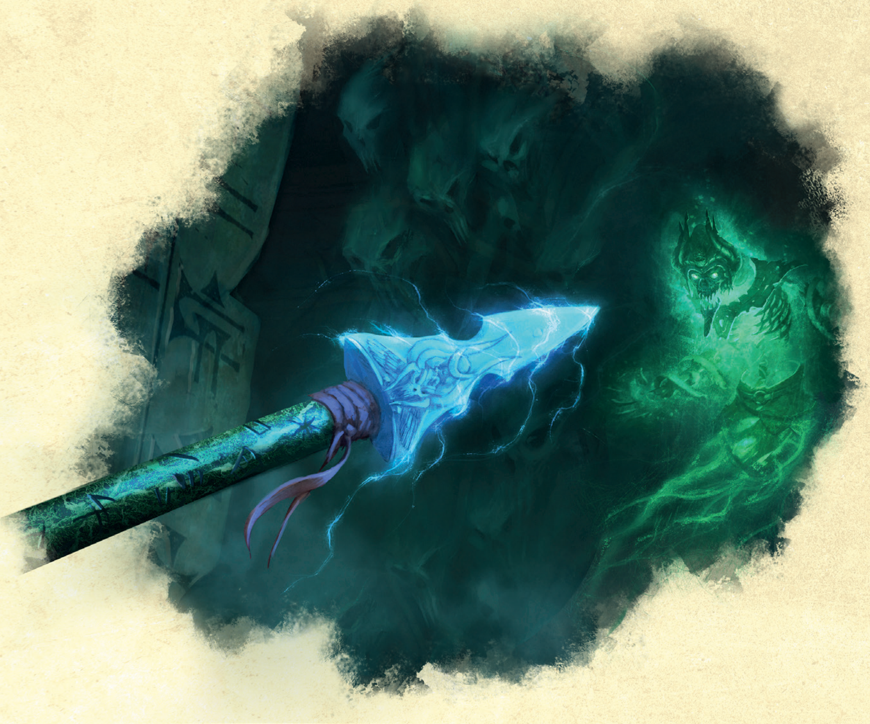
NEW EQUIPMENT

QUIVER

2 ss
A quiver holds 20 arrows. The price of the quiver includes 20 arrows.

SLING POUCH

4 cs
A sling pouch holds 10 sling stones. The price of the sling pouch includes 10 sling stones the size of the wielder's fist.



PHASES OF THE MOONS

The lunar calendar of Kalypsis is laid out on page 148 of *Jackals* and is important to several of the rites Jackals invoke, as well as several adventures – such as *Fall of the Children of Bronze*. Here are some guidelines for Loremasters to set the moons for adventures:

Gai – The green moon moves from full to new and back again over 38 days.

Kauma – The red war moon cycles every 18 days. Some believe it is the reason the War Road is currently so violent.

Oura – The silver moon takes the longest to cycle, moving from full to new and back to full over 51 days.

If Loremasters need something on the fly, Loremasters should consider using these rules: roll 3d100 and consult the following chart.

PHASES OF THE MOON

Roll	Kauma	Gai	Oura
01-04	Full Moon	Full Moon	Full Moon
05-08	Full Moon	Full Moon	Full Moon
09-12	Waning gibbous	Waning gibbous	Full Moon
13-16	Last Quarter	Waning gibbous	Waning gibbous
17-20	Last Quarter	Last Quarter	Waning gibbous
21-24	Waning crescent	Last Quarter	Waning gibbous
25-28	New Moon	Waning crescent	Last Quarter
29-32	New Moon	Waning crescent	Last Quarter
33-36	Waxing crescent	New Moon	Last Quarter
37-40	First Quarter	New Moon	Waning crescent
41-44	First Quarter	Waxing crescent	Waning crescent
45-48	Waxing gibbous	Waxing crescent	Waning crescent
49-52	Full Moon	First Quarter	New Moon
53-56	Full Moon	First Quarter	New Moon
57-60	Waning gibbous	Waxing gibbous	New Moon
61-64	Last Quarter	Waxing gibbous	Waxing crescent
65-68	Last Quarter	Full Moon	Waxing crescent
69-72	Waning crescent	Full Moon	Waxing crescent
73-76	New Moon	Waning gibbous	First Quarter
77-80	New Moon	Waning gibbous	First Quarter
81-84	Waxing crescent	Last Quarter	First Quarter
85-88	First Quarter	Last Quarter	Waxing gibbous
89-92	First Quarter	Waning crescent	Waxing gibbous
93-96	Waxing gibbous	Waning crescent	Waxing gibbous
97-100	Full Moon	New Moon	Full Moon

NEW PATRONS

AKRAIATOS OF ESCANOI		
Skill Requirement	Region	Sphere of Influence
Lore	The War Road	Political

Akraiatos of Escanoi is a Melkoni philosopher who found favour in the court of Adaanshummar and among the Gerwa and Trauj. Now a chronicler, he initially set out to record the background of the Unification War among the Luathi, but soon decided to chronicle the known world and its peoples. An ambitious project no doubt, but the first records from his journeys now circulate among the cities and refuges of the Zaharets. He always looks for those with interesting tales he can add to his work and hires Jackals for their stories as much as for their arms and valour.

Known Benefit: Akraiatos' patronage raises the *kleos* of the Jackal in question. He spreads their name and tales of their glory far and wide. The Jackal's *kleos* immediately increases +4. Additionally, this reputation increases the Jackal's Recognition bonus by +5%. However, human enemies now know of the Jackal's reputation and gain the trait *Hatred of X* (where X is the Jackal's name) for all combat tests. In return for Akraiatos' patronage, the Jackal must seek him out once per year and relate all their experiences. This counts as a seasonal action, but also grants the Jackal a free 'Find Rumours' action, as Akraiatos shares the news he has gathered, as well.

Exalted Benefit: Akraiatos' patronage increases the Jackal's *kleos* by an additional +8 and grants an additional +10% to their Recognition bonus (these bonuses stack with the +4 and +5% from the Known Benefit). Takan also gain the *Hatred of X* trait. As a gift to the Jackal, Akraiatos provides them with any one piece of equipment from *Jackals* or *Travellers*, with 3 traits of the Jackal's choice (see pages 164 – 166 in *Jackals*). Finally, Akraiatos invites the Jackal to escort him back to Escanoi and witness the end of the great war that dominates the city-states of Melkon. He will offer them a quality level 3 house in Escanoi if they agree to join him.

MALEKH OF ADAANSHUMMAR		
Skill Requirement	Region	Sphere of Influence
Influence or Combat	Ameena Noani	Combat and politics

The Malekh (or Malekeh) of the Bull Throne of Adaanshummar is a powerful ally and patron for any Jackal. The throne needs Jackals in a desperate way; people who will be loyal to it, rather than to tribe, city, or kingdom. As it seeks to build a kingdom infrastructure, it relies on loyal Jackals as guards, judges, messengers, and trouble-shooters. This may mean Luathi Jackals are forced to choose between the Throne's will and goals and those of their culture and tribe, but such is the nature of the birth pangs of a kingdom. However, for those whose patron is the throne, they enjoy the backing of a kingdom's resources.

Known Benefit: A Jackal with this level of patronage with the Bull Throne enjoys a +10% to Recognition checks within the borders of Adaanshummar, as well as a stipend of 500 ss per season for any needs they may have. In return, the Jackal is sent on a mission once per year to deal with Adaanshummar's needs. These missions may include judging disputes, slaying Takan, and dealing with rebels – perhaps from the Amar tribe.

Exalted Benefit: At this patron level, the throne calls upon the Jackal near constantly. Each season should have one adventure hook tied to the Bull Throne for the Jackal, which may be focused on ending rebellions to the throne. In cases where the Jackal acts on behalf of the throne and commits a corruptive action against a Lawful being who is in rebellion to the throne, they reduce any Corruption gained from their activities by 2. Their stipend rises to 1000 ss per season, which they may save up to spend on an Atonement, Craft or Commission an Item, Establish Home, or Hospitality seasonal action. Additionally, the Jackal may become a member of the *Ish Bahur* and gain a badge by taking the 'Pledge of the *Ish Bahur*' seasonal action.

Jackals may transfer their Patronage from Sar Phamea or Nawsi Sameel to the appropriate Malekh or Malekeh after the events of *Fall of the Children of Bronze* for free.

NEW CREATURE

KYKLOPS

The kyklopies of Kronis are the great warriors, teachers of humanity, and enforcers of the cthonic gods in the *Gigamachiad*. It is said they gifted humanity with the knowledge of the gods: music, agriculture, and metallurgy. The *Gigamachiad* states these gifts were meant to entice humanity to worship Kronis and the cthonic ones, leading humanity to its ruin. Few of the kyklopies remain, as they were hunted down by the heroes of renown in the elder days. However, those descended from Ceenon still plague the lands around Kroryla and the Valley of Troikos to this day. They are known for their crafting skill – those who find the lair of a kyklops will reap great rewards, assuming they survive the encounter.

KYKLOPS

Type:	Giant	Location:	Melkon and areas around Kroryla
Defence:	65%	Wounds:	90
Combat:	110%	Protection:	6 (3 natural +3 bronze armour)
Knowledge:	60%	Move:	20
Urban:	35%	Initiative:	14
Common:	75%	Clash Points:	2
		Treasure Score:	4

Special Abilities

Strength of the Gigamachiad: Kyklopies ignore 3 Protection on all creatures due to their strength.

Skill of Old: Kyklopies possess a combat skill of 110%. The Loremaster can select a talent for the creature before combat to represent this creature's unique fighting style.

Combat Range

1–15%	*Shocking Blow:* the Kyklops wings its target instead of hitting it full on. 4d8 (18) melee, 2d8 + 3d6 (20) ranged.
16–40%	*Pinning Strike:* the Kyklops stabs downward, pinning their opponent to the ground. 4d8 (18) melee, 2d8 + 3d6 (20) ranged. The target must make a hard Athletics check or be pinned to the ground for 1d4 rounds. A pinned target's Move drops to 0 and moves the Kyklops' initiative spot up 1 step on the initiative track.
41–70%	*Stunning Strike (2 attacks):* 4d8 (18) melee, 2d8 + 3d6 (20) ranged. If both attacks hit the same target, the opponent loses all Clash Points for 1d4 rounds, or half that number with a successful Endurance check.
71–90%	*Thunderstrike:* the Kyklops looses a bolt of thunder, either charging up its melee attack or hurling the bolt at its target. 6d8 (27) melee or ranged damage. The discharge knocks the target prone, and the target loses 2d4 Clash Points at the start of their turn for 3 rounds. A successful hard Endurance check negates both effects.

GLOSSARY

Adaanshummar (l). The unified Kingdom of the Luathi.

Agora (m). An open-air market.

Akraia (m). Wife of Araton and mother of the gods.

Akraiatos of Escanoi. Melkoni philosopher, historian, and patron.

Anahaluf (t). The Well of the World, the great oasis of the Luasa Sands and sacred site of the Trauj.

Anaxi (m). Chief or ruler.

Ashan (t). Clan or family group.

Azimrayis (t). Clan chief of the Trauj.

Cynaian (m). Tribal horse nomads of the steppe country north of Melkon.

Delphyians (m). Melkoni cult dedicated to Hetenon, lord of the wine-dark sea.

Denkrith Uhmann (h). 'The False Womb'; the fields of the far north where the armies of the Grand Kingdoms were slain by the forces of Imil-Ajas, the shadow on the arc of the world.

Dwanib Ankat (g). The southern mountain range of Ger.

Elkia the Great (m). The last ruler of Sardon and the first queen of the Melkoni people.

Eki Ezeru (i). 'The Twice-Cursed House.'

Ekur Enir (i). 'The Bright House, which is Like a Mountain'; a Hannic house mentioned in the *Gigamachiad* as an ally of Sardon.

Grand Kingdoms (l). The three Hulathi kingdoms that ruled over the Zaharets before the time of the Kingdom of Ignorance.

Gigamachiad (m). The great epic of Melkon, chronicling the war against the giants, the overthrowing of the cthonic gods, and the establishment of the Pantheon and Vonokental.

Hakides (m). Both the god of death and the realm of the dead in the Silent Lands; brother to Araton and Hetenon

Haluzanrab (t). The dream flower, found in the eastern range of the A'hule Asa. Used by the Trauj for tattoos, coming of age rituals, and dream travelling.

Hephangeles (m). Land of the Milk Drinkers, north of Melkon and site of the colonies.

Hetenon (m). Lord of the wine-dark sea; brother to Araton and Hakides.

Hetiamulak (t). The Dream Road.

Ikkora (h). The river that marks the boundary of the Silent Lands and the lands of the living.

Ish Bahur (l). The Chosen or Chosen Ones; an order of warriors in Adaanshummar.

Kiani (g). Divine Child; ruler of a City of the Eight in Ger.

Kleo (m). The muse – a divine spirit that inspires – of history; patron muse of Akraiatos of Escanoi.

Kronis (m). Chief among the old gods, cast down into the abyss and Hakides by Araton and his two brothers according to the *Gigamachiad.*

Kyklops (m). A race of one-eyed giants who inhabit Melkon, the most famous of which are Ceenon and his Daughters.

Makenzil Yakalim (t). The house where none speak, the Trauj term for the Silent Lands.

Maquirisan (t). Great meeting of the clans, held annually during Zadon's Week.

Mavok (t). Glory or remembrance.

Mouadyahtah (t). Cursed or damned ancestors among the Trauj.

Nisakeans (t). The fabled horses of the Trauj.

Obeurim (l). Traveller; someone who journeys on the War Road; a Jackal.

Ouwathia Oulermo (h). The Blessed Isle; a mythic island nation of the Hulathi that sank beneath the ocean waves long ago.

Psiloi (m). Peasant soldier of Melkon.

Raksar (?). A land to the east of Mouadah and the kingdoms of Drembara, Kamar, and Urkosah; the Trauj speak of it as a land of mystery, wonder, strange beings and magics.

Rayis (t). Trauj familial chief.

Shauqabil (t). The Great Longing; a prophecy among the Yahtahmi of the Trauj.

Tasanikam (t). A potent spirit the Trauj brew from the *tasanizanrab* flower; used as a libation, poured out for and shared with the honored ancestors.

Tasanizanrab (t). The lily-like flower that blooms on the surface of Anahaluf; used by the Trauj for dyeing the inside of their tents, as well as for brewing *tasanikam.*

Typhoeus (m). The greatest of the cthonic warriors and servants of Kronis; mightiest foe of the Pantheon according to the *Gigamachiad* and subsequent battles.

Uman (?). A kingdom far west of Ger, often referred to as Sacred Uman.

Urtasis (m). Festival or holy time.

Vonokental (m). A mountain in central Melkon; home of the gods.

Vonopekos (m). Annual games held in Melkon and beginning to be celebrated throughout the Zaharets.

Wahdj-nefru (g). 'Green Sailors'; a group of pirates who plague the Gerwan coast.

Xenia (m). The laws of hospitality established by Araton and held as sacred by all Melkoni.

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